The Shunammite

And Other Addresses to Women

Cyril Bickersteth

JY 26 '88

THE SHUNAMMITE

AND OTHER ADDRESSES TO WOMEN IN MISSIONS AND IN RETREAT

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The Shunammite

and other

Addresses to Women in Missions and in Retreat

BY

THE REV. CYRIL BICKERSTETH, M.A.

of the Community of the Resurrection

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DEDICATED TO

S. H. E. AND C. E. AND OUR FRIENDS WHO

HAVE MET IN RETREAT AT CARLTON

1895—1907

"For this cause I bow my knees unto the FATHER of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, of Whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; that CHRIST may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of CHRIST, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of GOD."—*Eph.* iii. 14–19.

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PREFACE

MOST of the addresses contained in the first part of this little volume have been used very often in the parochial missions in which the writer has been engaged for nearly twenty-four years. They contain little or nothing that is original, but GOD has blessed them, and I am told that they may be useful to younger clergy who are beginning mission work, or to those who have to address meetings of mothers or classes of girls.

It has lately been my privilege to take some part in organizing the special missions of women to women, which were held at Bury in Lancashire in 1906, and at Hulme in the heart of Manchester in October, 1907.

As that kind of mission is a new experiment which has certainly proved worthy of a further trial, it may be worth while to explain what was done.

In Bury, at the invitation of the Archdeacon of Manchester and many of the parochial clergy, some five or six ladies came for ten days and addressed large gatherings of women and girls in factories and workshops during the dinner hour, and in various school-rooms at night. Some united services were held in church ; and the mission ended with a mass meeting of women in the Co-operative Hall. It was calculated that at least five thousand women were addressed, and a large number came forward to take a pledge or resolution card,

which is here reproduced because it indicates the scope of the mission—

WOMEN'S MISSION TO WOMEN

✠

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see GOD."
"Ye are the salt of the earth."
"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your FATHER which is in heaven."

✠

In thankful remembrance of GOD's message to my soul, I resolve to do my utmost

1. To promote purity of life.
2. To shield young people from temptation.
3. To make my home happy.

Signed, ...

In the presence of .....

LORD, we beseech Thee, grant Thy people grace to withstand the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil; and with pure hearts and minds to follow Thee the only GOD; through JESUS CHRIST our LORD. Amen.

Those who are aware of the moral and spiritual condition of some of our manufacturing towns will realize how great is the need of such an appeal, and it is obvious that women can address their own sex with greater plainness than is becoming in a priest. I am afraid that some may blame me for the plain speaking they will find in some of the following addresses, but I am very sure that we clergy greatly fail in an obvious duty if we do not warn young people of both sexes of the perils to which they are exposed, and if we do not rebuke a sin which is beginning to threaten the very existence of our race. In a book like this, which may be read by the young and innocent, I could not quote the

passages from Dr. Taylor, to which I refer on page 24, but I wish that all clergy and all who address meetings of mothers would make themselves acquainted with his pamphlet.

I have reprinted a sermon which was preached some years ago to the Women's Help Society at the Annual Service in S. Paul's Cathedral, because I am anxious to call attention to that society as being, in my judgment, far the best society in the Church of England for binding together women and girls to promote purity of life. It has not at present the large numbers and the widespread influence of the Girls' Friendly Society, but I think any one who carefully examines its rules and objects will agree that it has a strong claim to be called the true handmaid of the Church ; for while it insists on the highest standard of purity, it leads all its members to aim at a definite religious rule and the regular reception of Holy Communion. Full information about it can be obtained from the Secretary, W. H. S., Church House Westminster.

The second part of this volume contains brief notes of retreat addresses delivered at Carlton, near Barnsley, in 1906. They were given to some of the women companions of the Fraternity of the Resurrection, who make a practice of spending three or four days in retreat every year, and who are glad to study some particular book of the Bible which may afford food for meditation, not only in retreat, but during the coming year.

It would be impossible to acknowledge my indebtedness to all who have, directly or indirectly, helped in the production of this little book ; but I am specially grateful to my brother the Rev. Waldegrave Hart, for his care in correcting the proofs.

C. B.

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Part I

MISSION ADDRESSES TO WOMEN

(Mothers, Maidens, Young Women, Servants, Women, Church Workers)

together with a Sermon to

THE WOMEN'S HELP SOCIETY

I

The Shunammite

Address to Mothers

"*Is it well with thee? is it well with thy husband? is it well with the child?*"—2 Kings iv. 26.

SUCH was the message addressed by a man of God to a woman, a wife and a mother; and we may well take them as a sort of keynote for the special services for women which will be held during the mission; for such services are intended to set women thinking, first of their own relation to God, and then of their duties both towards their husbands and their children.

The words were spoken by Gehazi, the servant of Elisha, to the Shunammite, of whom we read in 2 Kings iv. Presently we will think how true it is that the same words are addressed by our Lord Jesus Christ to the mothers who are here this afternoon; but we may well spend a little time in studying the character of the woman to whom they were first addressed.

(1) The Shunammite was evidently one who made the most of her religious opportunities. She did not live in the clear light of the Gospel of Christ; there was no church at hand with the bell

ringing week by week, or day by day, to call her to worship and to prayer ; there was no minister of CHRIST specially charged to watch for her soul, and to remind her of her duty to GOD. She was dependent for all her knowledge of GOD and holy things on the very occasional visits of the prophet Elisha, as he went about from place to place to call men to the worship of Jehovah.

Now it often happens that religious opportunities are valued just in proportion to their rarity. Sometimes those who live under the shadow of the church, and have abundant means of grace close at hand, are strangely careless and indifferent ; while those who are deprived of spiritual privileges feel their loss and greatly long to have them. I found this so, when it was my happiness to preach missions like this in out of the way places in South Africa ; there people gladly came long distances, day after day, to hear the old old story of GOD's love, and join with others in singing these familiar hymns. The same story is told by missionaries in Australia, where single-handed priests, in charge of parishes the size of Yorkshire, find little congregations who have ridden thirty or forty miles to join once more in the old familiar hymns and prayers, and receive the Holy Communion of the Body and Blood of CHRIST.

Whatever may be the case at ordinary times, I hope I may take it for granted that all who are here to-day mean to take full advantage of the

opportunity of the mission ; and so they will note with sympathy the determination of the Shunammite to secure for her people the blessing of the prophet's visit. That was why she said to her husband : "Behold now, I perceive that this is an holy man of God, which passeth by us continually. Let us make a little chamber, I pray thee, on the wall ; and let us set for him there a bed, and a table, and a stool, and a candlestick : and it shall be, when he cometh to us, that he shall turn in thither." She hoped that the prophet would stay in her house and leave a blessing behind him.

(2) If a woman's first duty is to God, in the case of a wife next comes her duty to her husband ; and we must notice in this story what a beautiful picture is given of the confidence that should always exist between a married couple. The Shunammite formed no plans without taking counsel with her husband ; she did not take in a lodger without his approval ; and when she was in trouble she did not even go and see the man of God without his consent. Now this was the more remarkable because the husband was one of those who did not entirely share his wife's religious sentiments. He was like those people who think it all very right and proper to go to church on Sundays and, perhaps, to receive Holy Communion once a month, but who are inclined to say : Why go to church on a week-day ? Why go to Holy Communion so often ? This is suggested to me, at least, by his remark :

"Wherefore wilt thou go to him to-day? it is neither new moon, nor sabbath." He evidently did not understand how natural it is in times of trouble to turn to the person who has brought one to the knowledge of God, and whose office it is to give comfort in trouble and counsel in perplexity.

But the husband of the Shunammite was not so foolish as to hinder his wife's religion when he saw that it made her a better woman. Let me say, in passing, that if there are any women here who find it difficult to secure sympathy from their husbands in religious matters, their wisdom is to show, as she did, that their religion is of a very practical character. It is not often that men are so foolish as to find fault with their wives' religion if it is of quite the right sort.

(3) The Shunammite not only put first her duty to God and then her duty to her husband; she evidently felt that a woman's proper place is at home. When the prophet Elisha wished in some way to reward her for her kindness and hospitality, he bade Gehazi find out what were her ambitions. "Say now unto her, Behold, thou hast been careful for us with all this care; what is to be done for thee? wouldest thou be spoken for to the king, or to the captain of the host?" She has no wish to be a fine lady and go to court; she evidently felt that a woman's proper place is at home, and so she answered: "I dwell among mine own people." Surely that is right. No doubt there are cases in which women may

find happy and useful occupation in wider service; but for most women there is nothing better and happier than "to marry, bear children, and guide the house" (1 *Tim.* v. 14).

(4) The Shunammite, like all the rest of us, had her troubles. "The heart knoweth its own bitterness, and a stranger doth not meddle with it," but I am very sure that there are none here without their troubles; and hers was a very real one. God had given her a good husband and a good home, but she was childless. She and her husband were getting on in years, and their wedded love had not been crowned with the best gift that marriage can bestow. There was an empty place in her heart; and though she hesitated to speak of it, Gehazi found out how real a trouble it was that she had no child. Though it seemed too good to be true, Elisha did not hesitate to promise that her prayers should be heard, for he said, "At this season, when the time cometh round, thou shalt embrace a son."

The promise was fulfilled, the child was born, and grew up to be the light of his mother's eyes, and the joy of his father's heart. You can imagine, my sisters, what it was to that elderly couple to see the little lad grow up in health and strength, until at last one day, when he went out with his father and the reapers into the harvest field, trouble came. It seems that quite suddenly he met with a sunstroke or something of the sort, and said to his father, "My head, my head." The father said to a servant, "Carry him to his

mother" (how like a man!). Certainly his mother's lap is the best place for a sick child; but "he sat on her knees till noon, and then died." My sisters, if GOD has taken from you a child, though it be one of many, you can feel for the poor mother who lost so suddenly her little lad, the child of her old age, the child of promise, on whom her whole heart was set.

It was in that dark hour that she turned to the man of GOD. She left the little lad lying dead, and hastened to the prophet's distant home. It was then that Gehazi met her with the threefold question of our text. Though her heart was fit to break, and though her husband was left watching the poor little body at home, she did not hesitate to say, "It is well."

Happy, indeed, are they who are able to say in the darkest hour of bereavement, "It is well," "The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the Name of the LORD" (*Job* i. 21). Like David she could say, "While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept: for I said, Who can tell whether the LORD will be gracious to me, that the child may live? But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me" (2 *Sam.* xii. 22, 23).

We have not time to linger over the sequel to the story. By the power of GOD, the prophet Elisha was enabled to do for the broken-hearted mother far more than she had dared to ask or think. "The effectual fervent prayer of a

righteous man availeth much," and GOD restored the child to life. We have no right to say that the age of miracles is past, or that there are any limits to the power of prayer; but in our own most bitter bereavements we are content to say—

> "If Thou shouldst call me to resign
> What most I prize, it ne'er was mine;
> I only yield Thee what is Thine;
> 'Thy Will be done.'"

For us it is enough to know that there is a sure and certain hope of resurrection, and a happy meeting hereafter with those whom we love who sleep in JESUS.

We will leave the Shunammite and her story, and think only in the few minutes which remain, what kind of answer you are prepared to make to the threefold question, "Is it well with thee? is it well with thy husband? is it well with the child?"

At a later stage in the mission there is much to be said about the duties of wives to their husbands, and mothers to their children; but the first question is purely personal. Believe, my sisters, that our LORD JESUS CHRIST has sent me to say to you, one by one, Is it well? I am not asking about your bodily health, about worldly prosperity, but simply, Are things right between your soul and GOD? You may have heard of missions in which the question is put, "Are you converted?" or, "Are you saved?" I do not put it quite like that, not because I do not believe in conversion, but because I am horribly afraid of

encouraging self-righteousness and self-deceit; but it is right to ask, "Are you, or are you not, in a state of salvation?" There was a time when you were, if as a little child you were brought to Holy Baptism and placed in the arms of JESUS. Then, indeed, you were "Safe in the arms of JESUS, safe on His gentle breast"; but how much has happened since! Baptism is not, in itself, the guarantee of final perseverance; and those who once were safe may now be in a state of the greatest possible danger. There are some very simple tests; let us apply them with sincerity and courage:—

(i) Certainly they are not safe who live in wilful disobedience to the known law of GOD; one who gives way to intemperance, or lust, or any other wilful sin, forfeits the grace of Holy Baptism, and is in danger of eternal death.

(ii) Certainly they are not safe who wilfully neglect known means of grace. To be living without prayer, without the study of GOD'S Holy Word, above all without Holy Communion—if once one has known the meaning of that Holy Feast—is to be living without the Saviour; and to be without the Saviour is to be in a state of appalling danger.

(iii) It is possible that there are some who are trying to avoid wilful sin and to use the means of grace, and yet have not found salvation because they have never made a true repentance, and never sought to cling to JESUS as the limpets cling to the rock.

A mission is the time for facing these serious questions ; and we must pray with all earnestness that during these next few days many will be able to say from the bottom of their hearts, "Thank God, it is well."

In the mission sermons and instructions at night, much will be said about the duty of self-examination, and the marks of true repentance ; but I hope that these addresses to women may serve to touch the conscience, as well as to suggest what wives and mothers may do by prayer, by precept and example, to bring those whom they love to be at peace with God. Very often the recollection of her duty to her husband and to her children is the strongest motive by which we can appeal to a wife and a mother to set in order her own life.

II

The Mother of Moses

Address to Mothers

"*Take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages.*"—Exod. ii. 9.

THESE words come into my mind every time that I have the happiness to baptize a baby. As one puts the little one back into its mother's arms, the little brow wet with the dew of heaven, and the cross stamped upon its forehead, it seems as though God Himself were saying to the mother, "Take this child away, and nurse it for Me, and I will give thee thy wages." Let us take these words, then, this afternoon, as the starting-point for some thoughts about a mother's work and a mother's wages. You know better than the preacher how hard and unceasing is a mother's work; but perhaps you never thought of a mother's wages. Believe me those wages will be paid at last. When "her children rise up and call her blessed," and when at last she stands before the throne of God, saying, "Lo! here am I, and the children whom Thou hast given me," the mother will be amply rewarded for all her toil. We hear much nowadays of religious education, and it is essentially a question

for mothers; but in this address I desire to include godmothers and all who are directly, or indirectly, responsible for the education of children. It has been well said, "The greatest service we can do for any human being is to give him a right education—physical, intellectual, moral, and religious. It is our duty to labour and to pray that no child of GOD may grow up with an enfeebled body, or a darkened mind, or a callous heart, or a perverted conscience. And the best education must be given to woman; for she as mother is the aboriginal GOD-appointed educator. Where woman is ignorant, man is coarse and sensual; where her religion is but a superstition, he is sceptical and irreverent."[1]

In days when the education in our schools is a matter of national concern and almost incessant discussion, it is important to remember that education begins at home, and the power of the teacher for good or for evil is insignificant compared with that of the mother. An eminent educational authority has said, "It seems to be taken for granted that the parents have only to produce the raw material for the teacher to work up." That is not a very high ideal of the function of the parents; and in all seriousness I want to say to the mothers, however much may be done for your children by devoted teachers and by the clergy, no one else can possibly relieve you of your own GOD-given responsibility. Perhaps you say, "The

[1] "Education," a sermon preached by the Most Rev. J. L. Spalding, Archbishop of Peoria, U.S.A., in Rome, 1900.

children have so much better schooling than I ever got myself that I do not like to interfere." That may be so, but remember the children learn a lot before they go to school; and what they learn at school makes far less impression on their mind and character than what they learn at home.

So, then, we turn this afternoon to one of those old Bible stories which tells us how the whole future of a child, and indeed of the nation whom he served, depended on the teaching that he got from his mother, and which she alone could give.

The story from which my text is taken is very familiar. The Book of Exodus is the history of the great typical deliverance when GOD brought His people Israel out of the house of bondage; and He began it by choosing a man, and giving him a special training for his special work.

The children of Israel were, as we know well, in a state of abject misery; and there was no one with the capacity to lead them, or to inspire the hope of freedom and national life. They had gradually sunk into the condition of slaves, and there was no hope of release till GOD looked down in pity and gave them a leader.

It was in these dark days that a son was born to Amram, a Levite, and Jochebed his wife. King Pharaoh had endeavoured to limit the Hebrew population by murdering the male children at their birth, and Jochebed could only save her child's life by concealment. For three months she hid him in her own house; and then, when that was no longer possible, she made the little

cradle of rushes, and left the babe to the providence of God by the brink of the Nile. Every child knows the story of Miriam, the little sister minding baby, till Pharaoh's daughter and her maidens came down to bathe in the river. Behold, the babe wept, and its cry went straight to the woman's heart. The princess knew at once what it meant. Here was a Hebrew child left to die, in accordance with her father's orders, but she resolved to save it. She resolved to adopt the child, and bring it up as her own in the royal palace. This gave to Miriam her opportunity. The babe would need a nurse. So she said to the princess, "Shall I go and call thee a nurse of the Hebrew women, that she may nurse it for thee?" So it came about that Jochebed was summoned, and hired as the nurse of her own child.

Now we see how the divine plan was fulfilled. The poor woman's child was adopted into the palace, where he would be sure to receive a first-rate education in the things which were needed to make him a soldier, a statesman, and a lawgiver. Remember that at the time of the Exodus, Egypt was the centre of the world's civilization; and, so far as science, literature, and all the knowledge of this world was concerned, the future of Moses was assured.

But there was one person, and one only, in Pharaoh's palace who could teach the child the things which really matter most, and without which all human learning is worse than useless. If you ask what made Moses different from the

Egyptian princes whose intellectual training he shared, the only possible explanation is that his mother taught him what they knew not—namely, the knowledge of the true GOD and the destiny of His people.

The effect of her teaching came out in the crisis of his life. "By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to be evil entreated with the people of GOD, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; accounting the reproach of CHRIST greater riches than the treasures of Egypt: for he looked unto the recompense of reward." This was for him the time of decision, when he had to make his choice between a life of ease and pleasure in the royal palace, and a life of unknown hardships and danger amongst the poor. Other brave men and women have had to make a similar choice, and we may be very sure that, when they choose the path of self-sacrifice and self-denial, they are often influenced by the recollection of a mother's faith and a mother's love. It has been well said that two forces are at work in nature: there is the struggle for existence, and there is the struggle for the life of others; and it is not fanciful to trace all the unselfish virtues to the rudimentary force of maternal love, which finds a place even in the lower animals, and which reaches its perfection in the Christian mother, whose model is the Mother of the Saviour of the world.

Here we may leave the case of Moses, for it is only one out of many which might be chosen to

enforce the supreme importance of a mother's training.

Suffer me to offer some very practical suggestions. The question may be asked, When does a mother's influence on her child begin? Some foolish people seem to fancy that children must be left alone, at least so far as religious training is concerned, until they are of an age to be converted. This is, of course, preposterous; and every one who is not blinded by prejudice or bigotry must know how important for good or evil are the earliest years. Shall we say that a mother's influence on her child begins at least as soon as the little one goes to the infant school? No; it is earlier than that. Is it when first your little one looks up into your face and begins, as you say, to take notice? No; it is earlier than that. It would not be too much to say that the mother's whole past life tells upon her children. Your children take after you not only in form and feature, but in character and disposition. The baby not only has his mother's eyes and his father's nose, he may easily inherit his mother's temper, or his father's insatiable craving for strong drink. Here we touch upon a terrible subject; but remember that it is as much revealed by modern science as by ancient revelation, that the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children unto the third and fourth generation.

Something must be said on another occasion about the way in which a mother influences her child during that anxious period, when the little

life is bound up with her life, and she carries within her the child that is coming. On this most serious and important subject we will refer to in the story of the mother of Samson (*Judges* xiii).

But to-day we begin with the obvious duty of the Christian mother to have her child baptized, and that, as soon as may be after its birth. The mother, who was GOD's instrument for bestowing upon the child its natural birth, must see that her child is brought to holy Mother Church to be born again and received into the family of GOD. Careful mothers will pay strict attention to the rule of the Church, which requires that every child must have three sponsors, and those communicants, besides the parents. Such a rule is the guarantee of a religious education ; and, strange as it may sound to some, I do not hesitate to say that we have no right to baptize a child (unless it be in immediate danger of death) without securing, so far as we can, adequate guarantees that it shall have a Christian education.

It is sometimes said that to baptize is the plain command of CHRIST, while to have sponsors is only a rule of the Church, which is of far less importance. But, in fact, our LORD commands us to make disciples and baptize, and we have no right or authority to separate the gift of grace from the condition which He requires. It is impossible to exaggerate the mischief that has come from the tendency to regard Baptism rather as an insurance against eternal loss than the commencement of Christian life on earth.

From the very moment of the Baptism, the true Christian mother regards her child as belonging to JESUS, while it is her privilege to train the child for Him. Baptism is indeed the starting-point, but "the grace of GOD in the heart of man is like a tender plant in a strange, unkindly soil." So it is not surprising that the baptismal gift requires incessant watchfulness. We know well that a mother has not done her work when she has brought her child into the world. A baby is the most helpless and dependent of creatures, and its physical life would soon wither and decay if it were deprived of watchful care. It is so with the spiritual life also; and Christian Baptism fails to produce the effect, which our LORD intends, when it is divorced from Christian education.

It will, I hope, be acknowledged by every one that it is the mother's duty to teach her child to pray; and you can scarcely begin too soon to fold the hands and bend the little knees and put the little one in the attitude of prayer. Every one who has had a good mother can say, like the preacher, that he cannot recollect learning to pray. He can no more remember when he first began to pray than when he first drew nourishment from his mother's breast. Happy are they who are taught to lisp "Our FATHER," and lift up their hearts to GOD, as soon as they can utter any words at all.

We often hear people speak of saying prayers at a mother's knee. Forgive me if I venture to say that that familiar phrase sometimes suggests a

very unseemly practice. I have often seen a picture of a mother reclining in an arm-chair, and a child kneeling down on the floor at her knee. If that represents what is meant by saying prayers at a mother's knee, I am sure that it is all wrong. The mother should herself be kneeling down beside the child, and the child should know that he is saying prayers, not to mother, but to God. I have heard of a good lady who ought to have known much better, actually saying to her little child, "Go, my dear, and say your prayers to-night to Miss ———," a lady who happened to be staying in the house. Apparently she regarded the child's prayer as a pretty performance, a way of showing off before a visitor. It would have been far less objectionable if she had said, "Go, my dear, and say your prayers to-night to the Blessed Virgin Mary." That would at least have suggested some contact with the spiritual world; but, in fact, the whole duty of a mother is to lead her children from the first to come into the Presence of God and address their prayers unto Him. That is a lesson which can be taught infinitely better by example than by precept. Mothers, you want your children to pray not only when they are little, but when they are far away from home—when the soldiers are in a barrack-room, or the boys at a public school. Please God, they will do so, if they have often seen that mother herself falls low on her knees before the throne of the King of kings. We have only reached the very first stages of religious education; but it is some-

thing if we have established the point that in prayer, as in everything else, the mother must set the example which she longs that her child should follow. I have heard of a man who was climbing up a steep and dangerous cliff, where even a strong man needed to take the utmost care. He heard a voice behind him—the voice of his little lad, who said, "Father, mind where you tread, for I am following in your steps." The lesson of that simple parable is obvious; how careful we should be of our words and our behaviour, if we never forgot the eyes and ears of the little ones, whose whole future is affected by our example!

III

The Mother of Samson

Address to Mothers

"*Then Manoah intreated the Lord, and said, Oh Lord, I pray Thee, let the man of God whom Thou didst send come again unto us, and teach us what we shall do unto the child that shall be born.*"—Judges xiii. 8, R.V.

IN this chapter we read how God sent an angel to a woman who was about to become a mother, to tell her how she was to behave in order to secure the best interests of her child. The subject is of supreme importance from a physical, moral, and religious point of view; and though it involves touching a matter of which it is difficult and distasteful to speak, I feel that I ought not to shrink from uttering some grave words of warning; and I ask your prayers, that I may say nothing to harm the innocent, while I speak with sufficient plainness to warn all to be on their guard against a great and growing evil.

The wife of Manoah lived in days when God ruled His chosen people by a succession of Judges,—strong men whose business it was not only to administer justice, but to save Israel out

of the hands of the Philistines by their courage and strength. Now courage and physical strength depend very much on early training; and, as we saw in the case of Moses, the mother's influence upon her child commences at the very beginning of its life.

The wife of Manoah was without a child, when the angel of the LORD appeared and said unto her, "Behold now, thou art barren, and bearest not: but thou shalt conceive, and bear a son. . . . And no razor shall come upon his head: for the child shall be a Nazirite unto GOD from the womb: and he shall begin to save Israel out of the hand of the Philistines."

The child was to be a Nazirite, or as we should say a teetotaller, and, more than that, a man consecrated by a vow to GOD's special service, and pledged to a life of self-denial; and the striking part of the story is that, in order to secure the fulfilment of GOD's purpose for the child, the mother was to live the same sort of life herself by way of preparation.

It is, of course, a matter of common knowledge that strong and healthy children are born from strong and healthy mothers; and it is unhappily the case that children are often born into the world feeble in mind and body, because their mothers have been unfit for the duty and privilege of motherhood.

This may be due to ignorance or carelessness; and there are cases of appalling wickedness in which mothers attempt to destroy the life of

an unborn babe. Here I can only allude in passing to those evil ways which S. Paul describes as the "unfruitful works of darkness" (*Eph.* v. 11); but all thoughtful Christians ought to lay to heart the warnings of national ruin and decay which are contained in the statistics of the Registrar-General. It is certain that the decline in the birth-rate is not due to legitimate self-restraint, but to the growth of practices which are clean contrary to the ends for which God ordained marriage. About this I can say no more, but I strongly recommend those who can influence public opinion to read a pamphlet by Dr. Taylor, of Birmingham, on the *Diminishing Birth-rate*.[1]

To return to the wife of Manoah. She told her husband what the angel said; and together they prayed, in the words of our text, for further guidance. It is, indeed, a happy thing when parents realize their responsibility, and from the very first ask God to help them to educate their children well. In answer to their prayer the angel came again, and insisted that the welfare of the child depended on the behaviour of the mother. She who was to be the mother of Samson, the man famous for his great physical strength, must herself abstain from wine and

[1] The *Diminishing Birth-rate*. Presidential Address delivered before the British Gynæcological Society, February 11, 1904. Published by Ballière, Tindall & Cox, 8 Henrietta Street, Covent Garden. Parts of this should certainly be read to meetings of married women, but they can not be quoted here.

strong drink, and live the life of self-denial to which the child was to be called.

Perhaps you may say that these are questions for a doctor rather than for a priest; but religion is concerned with both the body and the soul, and it is a Christian duty to insist on healthy physical conditions, since they are bound up with spiritual well-being. In any case it is the preacher's duty to remind you that the spiritual health of the mother has much to do with the spiritual health of the child. We often read in the Bible of children who were "sanctified from the womb," and I suppose that means that the holiness of their mothers was, in some mysterious way, imparted to the children even before their birth. It must make a difference to a child whether it is born of a mother who is "in grace" or no. Perhaps this was one reason for an old rule, or, at least, custom of the Church, which has been almost forgotten. Happily it is still the case that mothers come to church to give thanks after child-birth; but in old days it was the custom for women, expecting their confinement, to come to church to make their confession, and receive Holy Communion. It is certainly natural and right that a woman should so prepare herself before she faces the great pain and peril of child-birth, and her own possible death; but I think the rule was also intended to secure the interests of the unborn child, and that it might so share in the holiness of the mother.

I refer to that old rule not because I wish that

such a rule were now compulsory, but to suggest to women that they should consider both their own highest interests, and those of an unborn child.

In a previous address on the mother of Moses I was saying that it is the duty of the mother to bring her child, as soon as may be, to the Church to be baptized ; and I insisted on the importance of Godparents, whose duty it is to co-operate with the parents in seeing that the child is taught the meaning and obligation of its Christian calling.

Perhaps if we had been more careful to insist on the office of sponsors, we should not now be in such serious difficulties with regard to religious education. According to the mind of the Church, there ought to be a body of faithful men and women, who have been specially charged with the duty of providing the children with a sound religious education. For to the sponsors it has been said, "It is your parts and duties to see that these infants be taught . . . and chiefly ye shall provide, that they may learn the Creed, the LORD'S Prayer, and the Ten Commandments, in the vulgar tongue, and all other things which a Christian ought to know and believe to his soul's health."

If the Godparents accepted this charge and responsibility to which they are deeply pledged, they would endeavour to secure the maintenance of Christian schools wherein these things are taught ; and where, alas ! this may now be impossible, they would never rest until they had

secured the natural right of every parent to have his child taught the religion of his choice in the public schools provided by the State.

Where definite religious instruction, including the Creed and the Catechism, are banished from the ordinary week-day schools, it becomes more than ever necessary to make much of Sunday schools and catechizing in church; but nothing can take the place of a mother's teaching. What children learn in school or church cannot make the same impression as what they learn at home. It is the mother who must instil the earliest lessons of faith and trust in GOD; and it is she who must check the beginnings of evil, and foster the growth of good.

Bear with me if I speak once more about a delicate and difficult matter. I do so because I have a message to give you from a young girl. Many years ago, in the course of a mission in a large manufacturing town, I had been speaking to a large congregation of young women and girls about the words, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see GOD." After the service, a young woman came to me with the tears streaming down her face. "Oh sir," she said, "do you not speak to the mothers? Will you give them a message from me?" It appeared that she was one whose whole life had been spoilt by a dreadful thing which happened when she was a mere child; and so she said, "Do tell the mothers to mind where their children sleep." You will understand what she meant. I know it is

difficult in very small houses to make the arrangements which are necessary to secure the modesty of growing boys and girls ; but where there is a will there is a way, and you cannot be too careful to teach children to value, above all things, purity of heart and life. I believe the mother is the best person to tell both boys and girls something of the mysteries of life and birth, and the nature and functions of the body. It is very sad, indeed, to know how many young people fall into grievous sin, because no one has ever plainly warned them of their danger. Surely every mother might, at least, say to her daughter something like this, " My child, your chastity is a precious jewel committed to your care ; guard it well, for, once lost, it can never, in this life at least, be fully restored. It is not enough to abstain from outward acts which might bring shame and disgrace ; you must also guard against listening to evil words, or allowing thoughts which sully your purity of heart."

A wise mother strives to win and keep the confidence of her girls ; and if she succeeds she will be able to preserve them from sin, and from the folly of throwing away their heart's affection on some one who is unworthy of a good woman's love.

Sometimes mothers tell me sorrowfully enough that they have no influence over their grown-up sons and daughters ; and then one is inclined to say : " Mother, give an account of thy stewardship, for thou canst be no longer steward. There

was a time when your children were like wax in your hands ; you might have moulded them as you would, but perhaps you were careless and indulgent then, and if so, it is no wonder that your influence is gone." The sins of men and women are often the outcome of childish faults which a mother's vigilance might easily have checked.

Sometimes, indeed, the mother is restrained from speaking to her children as she should, especially on the subject of purity, because she knows too well that her own life was stained; but if she were really and deeply penitent, her one desire would be to prove the sincerity of her own conversion by checking sin in others, and especially in her own children.

A mission is, indeed, a happy time, when mothers, penitent themselves, are full of prayerful eagerness to make their children penitent and holy. If there are some here whose conscience accuses them of old sins unconfessed and unforgiven, or of neglected duties to their children, let us try to help you to secure pardon for the past ; and then you will be ready to make a good resolution about the training of your children and the future ordering of your home.

IV

The Mother of Samuel

1 Samuel i.

Address to Mothers

THE story of Hannah, with which the First Book of Samuel opens, is another of those Bible histories which are full of interest and instruction for mothers; and there are some points about it which are singularly appropriate to the close of a mission.

Hannah describes herself as "a woman of a sorrowful spirit," and, certainly, she met with trouble at home, and trouble even in the house of God.

She lived in those distant days when even good men married more wives than one. We are not told that Elkanah, her husband, broke the divine law when he married both Hannah and Peninnah; but we are allowed to see very plainly how unhappy was the home where two women had an equal claim on the love of a husband.

Hannah's lot was all the harder to bear because Peninnah, her rival, had children, while she was childless, and Peninnah was a disagreeable person, who "provoked her sore, for to make her fret, because the Lord had shut up her womb." It

is true that her husband loved her and took her part, tenderly asking Hannah "Why weepest thou? and why eatest thou not? and why is thy heart grieved? am not I better to thee than ten sons?" Perhaps the last suggestion implied that Elkanah had rather too good an opinion of himself, but he meant it kindly; and he could not realize how sore is the woman's heart who finds herself a childless wife.

Now notice in the first place that, though Hannah had her troubles, she did not make that a reason for keeping away from the house of GOD. How often women say that they are so full of trouble that they cannot go to church! Perhaps, too, they are inclined to keep away because there is some one whom they do not like to meet. Hannah did not stop at home because she would not sit in the same pew with Peninnah; but she joined the rest of the family in their annual pilgrimage to Shiloh. At Shiloh they all joined in the great public service, but Hannah stayed behind when the service was over to pour out her whole soul in prayer.

It is a sign of real personal religion when people act like that. I do not like to see people rush out of church the moment service is over, like boys released from school. It is good to remember that we are in our FATHER'S house; and we have so much to say to Him that we may well linger in His Presence. During the mission the church has been well used, and we hope in the future that there may never be wanting good

congregations on Sundays, and week-days also, especially at the pleading of the Holy Sacrifice; but it will be better still if people learn to use the church more and more as their natural spiritual home, to which they may turn again and again for a little time of prayer and meditation and communion with God, even when there is no public service.

Hannah, then, stayed behind because her heart was full, and she could pour out her trouble before God; but here again she met with disappointment. She was misunderstood, and hardly judged by the very man who ought to have been ready to give her help and sympathy. If it was hard to be teased by Peninnah, it was harder still to be reviled by Eli, the priest, for an offence of which she was wholly innocent.

Eli marked her mouth, noticed the moving of her lips, and very rashly jumped to the conclusion that she had been drinking. He asks, "How long wilt thou be drunken? put away thy wine from thee."

I have sometimes met with women who say they do not care to come to church because the clergyman is not kind, or does not understand them! It is, of course, a very poor reason. We go to church, not because we are on friendly terms with the vicar, but because it is our duty, and our privilege, to worship God; and if, unhappily, we find little or no help from His ministers, there is all the more reason for calling upon Him.

Notice how meekly Hannah bore with the false accusation. I can easily imagine what some women would say if the vicar were suddenly to accuse them of being drunk, when in fact they were only saying their prayers. Hannah did not fly into a passionate temper and declare that she would never darken the church doors again so long as Eli was in the place, but she answered quite gently, "No, my lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit: I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I poured out my soul before the LORD."

And notice further how fully she meets the charge. She admits that if it were true it would be indeed disgraceful. "Count not thine handmaid for a daughter of Belial," as though one should say a drunken woman is a very devil. Drunkenness is bad enough in a man; but, believe me, it is worse in a woman, just because we expect women to be the best. When a woman loses her self-respect and falls into intemperate ways, it means utter moral degradation. Anyhow Hannah made the best possible defence. She was able to say she had not touched it. Now we know that if a woman, justly or unjustly, is suspected of intemperance, it does not always clear her character if she says, "Well, I do take a little drop when I feel a sinking," or, "I cannot get through the washing days without my beer." People are apt to shake their heads unless she can say like Hannah, "Thank GOD, I have not touched it."

Now Hannah had stayed behind to pray because she earnestly longed for a son; she knew that "children and the fruit of the womb are an heritage and gift that cometh from the LORD." She was not like those unnatural women who, from selfish love of pleasure, or craven fear of pain, take wicked means to shirk the responsibility of motherhood. She longed for a child, and so she prayed; and, further, she made a good resolution, or, in the Bible language, vowed a vow unto the LORD.

It is good to make these special promises to GOD, and Hannah made before GOD the very best possible resolution. "She vowed a vow, and said, O LORD of hosts, if Thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of Thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget Thine handmaid, but wilt give unto Thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the LORD all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head."

Every Christian mother desires to dedicate her children to GOD in Holy Baptism, and whatever be their calling in life, regards them as belonging to the LORD; but Hannah meant that her son should in a special sense be set apart for the service of the Sanctuary. The child in question, who was given in answer to her prayer, was Samuel; and we may well believe that his holy and devout life was largely shaped by his mother's prayers and original dedication. We notice further that Hannah did not tell Eli at the time what her special trouble was, or for what she made request.

Perhaps he would have gained her confidence had he been more kind and sympathetic; but at least he could give her his blessing, and pray "that the God of Israel might grant her petition."

It was some years after this that Hannah returned to fulfil her promise. Once more she came to Shiloh, this time with a glad and thankful heart, and no longer like a woman of a sorrowful spirit. Once more when the offering was made she appeared before the priest, and said, "Oh my lord, as thy soul liveth, my lord, I am the woman that stood by thee here, praying unto the Lord. For this child I prayed; and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of Him: therefore I also have granted him to the Lord; as long as he liveth he is granted to the Lord."

It was then that Hannah broke out into her *Magnificat*. Her song of thankfulness and praise in some ways formed the model for our Lady's song of triumph in which she expressed her joy, and in which the Church commemorates day by day the Saviour's Incarnation.

On Hannah's special resolution something must be said. She dedicated her child to the special service of God even before its birth, and why should not other mothers do the like?

You know how the Church needs priests to-day, and it ought to be the joy of Christian parents to give the best of their sons for the service of the Church. In days gone by, it was supposed that only the sons of the upper and middle classes were eligible for the ministry. Now we have

realized how grievously the Church has suffered from having "a class ministry with a property qualification"; and at Mirfield and elsewhere the way is open for the sons of the poorest to get, free of cost, a thorough and prolonged training, if they seem to have been really called of GOD to the ministry, and prove capable of profiting by a first-rate education. It is a real happiness to invite mothers, however poor, to put before their children this holy calling. The ultimate decision must be left to the lad himself, who alone can truly say whether he is conscious of a call; but it is impossible to doubt that in the complex circumstances which tend to shape vocation, a mother's prayers and a mother's training are very influential.

As I said at the outset of this address, the story of Hannah is specially appropriate to the close of a mission; and in conclusion I will briefly gather up and press upon your literal imitation some points in Hannah's life.

(1) She was one who persevered in religious duties in spite of difficulties at home, and difficulties arising from lack of sympathy and understanding in the minister of GOD.

(2) She was in trouble, and therefore she prayed to GOD with special earnestness.

(3) She not only attended the public service of the Church, but she remained behind for private prayer.

(4) She answered meekly when she was falsely accused.

(5) She made a good resolution, in which she obtained the blessing and intercession of the priest.

(6) She sang her *Magnificat.*

(7) She not only made her resolution, but she came years afterwards to say that she had kept it, and fulfilled the promise she had made to God.

(8) She made the resolution which is most appropriate for a wife and a mother, for it turned on the dedication of her child to God.

Many at this time are making good resolutions, and I hope that many of those who hear me now will stay behind after the service and do the same.

If you give us your confidence fully, we may help you to bear some burden of sorrow, and point to the Saviour Who alone can take away the burden of sin ; but we do not ask for more confidence than you are inclined to give. At least we can say, as Eli said, "Go in peace : and the God of Israel grant thy petition that thou hast asked of Him."

V

Mary the Mother of Jesus

Address to Mothers and Maidens

"*Now there stood by the Cross of Jesus His Mother.*"
S. John xix. 25.

IN the special addresses to women throughout the mission, I have been speaking sometimes to mothers and sometimes to maidens, but to-day I must speak to all women about the Mother-maid who brought into the world the Saviour, for she is the pattern for you all; and, because this is Friday, we will think of her in that dark hour when she stood beneath the Cross. Surely there is nothing so likely to touch a woman's heart, and lead her to penitence, as the recollection of the scene which S. John so tenderly describes.

"At the Cross her station keeping,
Stood the mournful Mother weeping,
Where He hung, the dying Lord;
For her soul of joy bereavèd,
Bow'd with anguish, deeply grievèd,
Felt the sharp and piercing sword.

Who, on Christ's dear Mother gazing
Pierced by anguish so amazing,
Born of woman, would not weep?

Who, on CHRIST's dear Mother thinking
Such a cup of sorrow drinking,
Would not share her sorrows deep?"

Perhaps there are some here who shrink from thinking much of the Blessed Virgin Mary lest they fall into the sad mistake of attributing to her a higher place than is her due. Certainly if there are any who address to her the kind of prayers which ought only to be addressed to Almighty GOD, or think of her as a friend and intercessor more accessible than JESUS, they are very wrong and foolish. I have heard of people whose devotion to our Lady leads them into a position which is extravagant and false, and we may be sure that they grieve the heart of Mary even more than those who neglect her altogether; but it is far more common for us English people, with our cold dull northern hearts, to withhold from one who is rightly called the Mother of GOD the loving and reverent recollection which is her due.

Let us try, then, to say carefully what we ought to think of her. Certainly she is the most highly-favoured of created beings. Far above angels and archangels and all the company of heaven is the dignity of the holy Virgin, who was GOD's chosen instrument for bringing into the world His only-begotten SON. It was not till Mary said "Behold the handmaid of the LORD; be it unto me according to thy word," that the way was open from heaven to earth, and GOD came down to dwell with men. First in heart and mind, and then in

her stainless body, the Blessed Virgin conceived the Eternal Word, and placed herself without reserve at the disposal of the HOLY GHOST. It is not too much to say that the salvation of the world depended on a woman's response to her wonderful vocation. Her office was unique, but there is a sense in which any faithful communicant may be like her—the chosen of the FATHER, the habitation of the Incarnate, and the instrument of the HOLY GHOST.

You remember how once while our LORD was teaching, a "woman of the company lift up her voice, and said unto Him, Blessed is the womb that bare Thee, and the paps which Thou hast sucked." It was very natural for a woman to congratulate the Mother who had borne such a Son, and our LORD did not say that she was wrong; but He called the attention of the disciples to the fact that her highest blessedness was one in which all might share. "Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the Word of GOD, and keep it" (*S. Luke* xi. 27, 28).

Again, it is not too much to call her "Mother of GOD"; indeed, the word Theotokos, which is so translated, is one of the watchwords of Catholic theology on which the Council of Ephesus insists, in order to safeguard the Christian Faith against the error of Nestorius, who denied that our LORD JESUS CHRIST was one Person, with two natures, human and divine.

The title is given to the Blessed Virgin not by way of honouring her, but to protect the true faith

in JESUS. We are not, of course, so foolish or so blasphemous as to assert that Mary was the Mother of His Godhead ; but we must make clear that the Holy Child, Whom she bare, was no other than the Second Person of the ever-blessed Trinity, of one substance, power, and eternity with the FATHER and the HOLY GHOST.

I insist on this because, if people do not think enough of the Blessed Virgin, they not only miss the precious lessons of her holy life, but they utterly misconceive the doctrine of the Incarnation. The doctrine of the Incarnation means not something dry and difficult, but just the teaching of the truth that Mary's Child is very GOD and very Man.

We may well say of her in the exquisite language of Wordsworth :

> "Mother, whose virgin bosom was uncrost
> With the least shade of thought to sin allied ;
> Woman ! above all women glorified,
> Our tainted nature's solitary boast ;
> Purer than foam on central ocean tost ;
> Brighter than eastern skies at daybreak strewn
> With fancied roses than the unblemish'd moon,
> Before her wane begins on heaven's blue coast ;
> Thy image falls to earth. Yet some, I ween,
> Not unforgiven the suppliant knee might bend,
> As to a visible power, in which did blend
> All that was mixed or reconciled in thee,
> Of mother's love with maiden purity,
> Of high with low, celestial with terrene."

Hers was, indeed, a life of singular happiness and dignity. Who would not envy the Mother "whose gentle nursing soothed to rest the Incar-

nate Son of God"? But a life of special nearness to God meant in her case, as it means in other cases also, a large measure of sorrow in this sinful world. From the very first, for His sake, Mary was misunderstood, and that not only by the cruel world, but by the holy man to whom she was espoused. There was a time when even Joseph did not know the mystery, and he was inclined to put away his espoused wife for fear of scandal. But the angel was sent to reassure him, and he was well content to be the foster-father of the Virgin's Son. It is exceedingly interesting to notice that S. Matthew has preserved his account of the Incarnation, as doubtless our Lady gave hers to S. Luke.

Again, we know how Mary must have suffered when she found that the Holy Child was the object of Herod's jealousy and hate. For His sake she must be an exile from her home. Again, how Mary must have suffered in that memorable going from Jerusalem to Nazareth when Jesus was lost! Some of us know what the loss of Jesus means to those who have once felt the joy of His Presence, and, like Mary, we must seek Him and never rest till He is found. It was not easy to learn the lesson that there was a part of His life which even His Mother could not share.

Even in the happy home at Nazareth, where He grew up in favour with God and man, Mary could not forget prophetic warnings of the coming agony. No one who has ever seen it can forget that wonderful picture called *The Shadow of the*

Cross, in which Mr. Holman Hunt has depicted the outstretched arms of the Holy Child, and the Mother's dreadful anticipation of His future agony. And to-day we remember how Mary's sorrows reached their climax as she stood on Calvary. Other women might fling themselves before the Cross in an uncontrolled agony of grief, but S. John tells us that Mary stood—stood erect and steadfast, with a faith which, even in that dark hour, never doubted that her Son was her Saviour and the Saviour of the world, working out redemption by His patient endurance of shame and torture.

Mothers and maidens, take your stand to-day beneath the Cross and gaze at Jesus with the eyes of His Mother. He is the great High Priest Who has prayed for sinners and absolved a penitent; and now He bends in love and pity from His royal throne of grief to comfort the mourners, and to bless those whom He loves with all the tenderness and strength of which human nature is capable.

We may reverently say that Jesus made His will. He has been stripped of all other earthly possessions, but He gives the Virgin-mother to the beloved disciple who is most worthy of such a sacred trust. If the Blessed Virgin and S. John overheard what He said to the penitent robber, how gladly would they have received the like reward for their fidelity! "This day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise" would have been a welcome promise indeed; but, in fact, they had

to live on and on when His visible Presence was withdrawn. S. John must live for sixty years, until all his fellow-Apostles have won the martyr's crown, and he has finished his work; and our Lady, too, must live until she can reveal to the Church the gospel of the Annunciation and the Infancy.

But for their consolation in life's dreary pilgrimage they were to be knit together, heart to heart, by those holy ties which bind Christians to one another in the family of GOD.

What practical thoughts may we gather from the example of the Blessed Virgin?

In the first place she reveals the dignity and worth of womanhood. How greatly GOD has honoured woman in choosing her to be the Mother of the Saviour! If mother Eve was the beginning of all the trouble of our race when she listened to the voice of Satan and dragged down her husband in her fall, it is Mary who brings back the blessing—and more than the blessing—Eve had lost.

Every mother may rejoice and know that her sorrows are turned into joy. It is part of the primæval curse that she brings forth her children in sorrow, but her sorrows are turned into joy because of the child-bearing of Mary.

Of the Blessed Virgin herself we are told very little in Holy Scripture; but her few recorded words are sufficient to indicate her character. There are, in fact, but seven recorded utterances:

(1) "How shall this be, seeing I know not a

man?" She does not dispute the great truth which the angel has revealed, but she wonders how it can be consistent with her virginity. It is the utterance of faith.

(2) "Behold, the handmaid of the LORD; be it unto me according to thy word." Here is the great act of submission and self-surrender.

(3) She "saluted Elisabeth." We are not told what words, if any, she uttered when she embraced her cousin and they rejoiced together over the unexpected blessings which had come to each. It is, anyhow, a sufficient expression of the great grace of sympathy.

(4) The longest, the central, utterance recorded is the great song of triumph which Mary uttered, and which the Church sings day by day as its expression of thanksgiving for the Saviour's birth. We may sum it up in the words, GOD is great — I am nothing — He has made me great. The *Magnificat* has been called the song of the Christian social revolution. It celebrates the triumph of the humble and the poor. Let us say or sing it day by day, with an increasing sense of all that we owe to the Son of Mary and His blessed Mother.

(5) I have already touched on the fourth recorded utterance, "Son, why hast Thou thus dealt with us? behold, Thy father and I sought Thee sorrowing." In this we see no impatient expostulation or rebuke. It is right to say with the Psalmist, "When my heart is in heaviness I will complain." It is the faithful, humble soul who

longs to justify and explain the ways of JESUS, and so is constrained to ask what He would teach us by the withdrawal of His visible Presence.

(6) The next words, taken from S. John ii, remind us of our Lady's intercession. As she told JESUS that the guests—His friends—wanted wine, we may be sure that it was the joy of Mary to link her prayer with the prayer of His people, and make known their requests unto Him.

And the last words of all, taken from the same chapter and the same incident, may well stand as the final message of Mary to the world and to the Church, "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it." She calls attention, not to herself, but to Him. Her whole aim and desire is to bring men to know and obey His will.

These words of Mary may provide some food for future meditation; but this afternoon I only ask you to kneel in silence before the cross, and ask our LORD to pour into your hearts the grace of penitence and true devotion.

> We beseech Thee, O LORD, pour Thy grace into our hearts; that, as we have known the Incarnation of Thy SON JESUS CHRIST by the message of an angel, so by His Cross and Passion we may be brought unto the glory of His Resurrection; through the same JESUS CHRIST our LORD. Amen.

VI

Ruth

Address to Young Women

"*And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, and to return from following after thee : for whither thou goest, I will go ; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge : thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God : where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried : the Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me.*"—Ruth i. 16, 17.

SUCH was the good resolution which a young woman made at a great crisis in her life. God had given her a good friend, and she resolved that she would stick to her, following her example and guided by her counsel while life should last.

The story of Ruth is one of those beautiful stories of human love and friendship in which the Old Testament is so rich. Let us never forget that the Bible not only contains all that we need to know to make us wise unto salvation ; it includes proverbs, history, poetry, and stories of human love—like that of David and Jonathan—

which are just what we need to form our ideals, if life is to be full of happiness and beauty.

You are doubtless very familiar with the Book of Ruth ; but there are lessons to be learned from Naomi and her daughter which have a special application at a time like this.

We read that a man of Bethlehem, named Elimelech, with his wife Naomi, and their two sons, Mahlon and Chilion, left their home in the Holy Land and went down to sojourn, for a while, in the heathen country of Moab. We are not told that they were wrong to do so, but I think we may infer that they made a sad mistake. It is not wise to leave one's home and bring up a family in a heathen land, apart from religious associations, and exposed to evil influence and example, merely to escape poverty. When Naomi turned homewards, bereft of her husband and her sons, it seemed to her as though the hand of the LORD had gone forth against her.

But our concern to-day is, not with the sorrows of Naomi, but with the blessings which her sojourn in the land of Moab brought within the reach of two heathen girls. Mahlon and Chilion married Ruth and Orpah, and by their marriage these two young women were brought into touch with a good woman. It was a new experience, and they soon felt the contrast between the old heathen ways and life in the home of a woman who feared GOD and kept His commandments. Some of you, my sisters, have marked the contrast even in this nominally Christian land

between the sort of home where people live in carelessness and sin with little or no thought of God, and other homes of which it might be truly said, "Christ is the Master of this house; the unseen Guest at every meal, the Hearer of every conversation." No wonder the Moabite girls quickly learned to love Naomi. She gave them a new idea of what a woman's life should be; and young girls are very quick to feel the attractive power of genuine goodness.

Trouble came, we know not how, and three widows were left alone. Elimelech, Mahlon and Chilion were dead, and Naomi felt that she must return to Bethlehem to end her days in the Holy Land. Both Ruth and Orpah were inclined to follow her, but Naomi thought that they should part. So she said, "Go, return each of you to your mother's house: the Lord deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead, and with me. The Lord grant you that ye may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband." The thought of parting was bitter to them both. "Then she kissed them; and they lifted up their voice, and wept," protesting that they would follow her. Naomi was obliged to tell them plainly that she had no worldly advantages to offer. She could not find them husbands in place of those whom they had lost. She was going back to poverty.

Again they lifted up their voice, and wept; but in the words which follow there comes out, for the first time, a striking contrast between the

two. The one was demonstrative and fickle, the other had the kind of love which lasts. "Orpah kissed her mother-in-law; but Ruth clave unto her."

How often do we see that those who are ready with great professions of affection are changeable and shallow, while others say less and mean more!

So Orpah left Naomi, and just notice what that meant. After learning better things, she turned back to the old heathen ways; for to return to her own people was to forsake the true GOD. She returned to an evil life, and a false religion, and we meet with her name no more in the Book of Life. It was then that Ruth made her great resolve. She looked forward to the future; she counted the cost; in three or four remarkable sentences, she summed up all that has most to do with a woman's life, and we may well take her words, clause by clause, as the suggestions for a rule and plan of life.

(1) "*Whither thou goest, I will go.*" So she chose her path, and her words remind us that there are crises and turning-points in every life, when the choice must be made between the broad and the narrow way. Our LORD has said to His disciples, "Enter ye in by the narrow gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many be they that enter in thereby. For narrow is the gate, and straitened the way, that leadeth unto life, and few be they that find it" (*S. Matt.* vii. 13, 14). In following

Naomi Ruth chose once for all "the road that leads us daily nearer God."

(2) "*Where thou lodgest, I will lodge.*" Here, again, she was very practical; she knew by experience how much depends on the places where one lives. If I speak to some who have to leave their homes for business or domestic service, let me beg them to be very careful where they lodge. It is wrong and foolish for a Christian maiden to take a lodging, or make her home, in a place where she has no reason to expect that she will be treated with honour and respect; and she will do well to follow some wise and loving friend like Naomi, who will be able to shield her from the perils and temptations which might so easily cause trouble or disgrace.

(3) "*Thy people shall be my people.*" In throwing in her lot with Naomi, "for richer for poorer, for better for worse," she was choosing also the right sort of friends. She knew how much depends on this; and suffer me, my sisters, to remind you also that nothing is so likely to make or mar a young woman's life as the kind of company she keeps. In the course of my mission-work for many years past, it has been my mournful duty to hear the stories of many sad and ruined lives. I know of girls, once as pure and innocent as any in this congregation, who are now living lives so shocking that those who love them best would far rather they had died as innocent children; and in almost every case of moral ruin, the beginning of the mischief was

that the thoughtless girl went with bad companions, who robbed her of innocence and prepared the way for deadly sin. You know the story of Dinah, the daughter of Jacob. She was only a child of fourteen, but she went out to see the daughters of the land. Perhaps it was only idle curiosity, but it led to trouble and disgrace for herself and for her family (*Gen.* xxxiv. 1, 2).

For young women, next to the means of grace, nothing is more important than the wise choice of friends; and forgive me if I remind you how much depends upon the choice you make in marriage. How utterly foolish is the girl who throws away her heart on the first man who flatters her vanity and pays her pretty compliments, without waiting to know whether he is really worthy of a good woman's love and trust.

(4) "*Thy God my God.*" Does it seem strange that Ruth puts almost last what we should say ought to come first? I think the reason is that she follows the order in which she had gradually learned the secret of Naomi's life. She was drawn by the beauty of her gracious ways—the order of her home—the unselfish kindness and simple human virtues, and she only gradually learned that the secret of it all lay in her religion. Naomi was, probably, not the sort of person to wear her heart upon her sleeve or babble about her religion; but one who came to know her well learned that the secret of her goodness was her faith in GOD.

In these short sentences, then, Ruth sums up

her plan of life ; and it would be well, indeed, if every young woman here were able to claim the friendship of a mother or an elder sister, that she might supply her with guidance and good example which is so important. There are excellent societies such as the Girls' Friendly Society or the Women's Help Society, which endeavour to provide working girls with such a friend. My sisters, if GOD has given you such a gift, make the most of it.

So far we have treated this story only as one of human love and friendship ; but these Bible stories always contain some deeper and more important truths, if we know how to penetrate beneath the surface. "There is a Friend that sticketh closer than a brother," and we may see, if we will, in the friendship between Ruth and Naomi, a figure of the friendship that should subsist between our souls and Him Whom we may address as "JESUS, my Shepherd, Husband, Friend."

The words that Naomi said to Ruth when Orpah turned back to her heathen ways remind us of a scene in the Life of CHRIST. There was a day when He had spoken of deep and difficult mysteries about Himself as the Bread of Life, and the way in which His disciples must feed on Him. Many of His disciples said, "This is a hard saying ; who can hear it ?" "Many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him," even as Orpah turned back from Naomi. Wistfully He turned unto the Twelve, and

said, "Would ye also go away?" S. Peter answered, "LORD, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." Even so we would take upon our lips the words that Ruth addressed to Naomi, and we would say to JESUS, "Oh, my LORD, entreat me not to leave Thee, nor return from following after Thee: where Thou goest, I will go; I will tread the royal highway of the holy Cross; where Thou lodgest, I will lodge. My house shall be like the home at Nazareth, where Thou didst dwell with Blessed Mary and S. Joseph, and that other home at Bethany, where Mary sat at Thy feet and Martha served. I will be a companion of all them that fear Thee. I will cleave to the unity of Thy holy Church, and I will come to Thy FATHER and our FATHER, and to Thy GOD and our GOD."

Such a resolution is suggested by the text, and is the appropriate answer to the challenge which a mission makes. GOD is saying to you, one by one, "Give Me thy heart"; and in the special resolution which you are invited to make, there must be, first the glad self-surrender to His call, and then the thoughtful consideration of the practical steps which should be taken to bring every detail of the daily life into closer conformity with His blessed Will.

VII

The Little Captive Maid

Address to Servants

2 Kings v

IN this chapter we find revealed the character of two persons employed in domestic service. The one had every advantage ; he lived for years in close association with a holy man of God, who gave him his entire confidence, and yet he turned out to be a liar and a cheat, and met with a terrible punishment. The other was carried away from home in childhood, and was living in a heathen household in a foreign land ; but she remembered the holy lessons which she had learned as a child, and so she was the means of bringing her master to know the true God, and find healing from a terrible disease.

The contrast is striking, and it deserves attention at times like ours, when people too often suppose that conduct depends on circumstance and not on character ; and the chapter contains lessons of special value for those who are employed in domestic service.

Let me say at once that I think that is a very

honourable employment, and one which may bring a person very near to our LORD JESUS CHRIST. Did He not Himself take the form of a servant? Did He not stoop to wash His disciples' feet, and teach us by His example that we should always be ready to serve one another in love? Did He not say, "He that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be humbled; and whosoever shall humble himself shall be exalted"? S. Paul insists again and again that our happiness consists in fidelity to our calling. "Let each man abide in that calling wherein he was called. Wast thou called being a bondservant? care not for it: but if thou canst become free, use it rather. For he that was called in the LORD, being a bondservant, is the LORD'S freedman: likewise he that was called, being free, is CHRIST'S bondservant" (1 *Cor.* vii. 20–22).

Domestic service, then, is a very honourable estate, which, like any other calling, has its own peculiar trials and temptations, and they may involve moral and spiritual ruin; but the very trials, rightly used, turn sinners into saints.

Let us study, then, this afternoon the story of Gehazi, and the story of the little maid.

We learned something of Gehazi in connection with the Shunammite. It seems that he accompanied Elisha in his journeys, and that the latter took counsel with him, as when, for instance, he sought to find out some way of rewarding his

hostess for her kindness and hospitality. It was Gehazi whose ready tact discovered her secret, and it was Gehazi who was sent to ask the memorable questions, "Is it well with thee? is it well with thy husband? is it well with the child?"

It is in the next chapter that his unworthy character is revealed.

Naaman the Syrian came to the prophet with his horses and his chariots and the great rewards which he was prepared to offer for the healing of his leprosy. Elisha was willing to heal him, when once he had laid aside his pride and had faith enough to do as he was bid, but the prophet was not the man to ask for or to accept rich rewards. He was content to bring a soul to the knowledge of God, and he would not spoil his disinterested ministry by the slightest appearance of self-seeking. When Naaman said, "Behold now, I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel: now therefore, I pray thee, take a present of thy servant," Elisha replied, "'As the Lord liveth, before Whom I stand, I will receive none.' And he urged him to take it; but he refused."

Such disinterested conduct was incomprehensible to the vulgar and avaricious mind of Gehazi. It seemed to him a foolish waste of an opportunity, just as it seemed to Judas wanton waste when Mary poured out her precious spikenard on the feet of Jesus.

And yet Gehazi might have known that his master's reputation was at stake, and that the cause

of the living God should not be compromised by even the appearance of greed. Religion has too often been dragged in the mire by the attempt to make it a profitable business. Like Judas, Gehazi saw his opportunity of gaining at any rate something for himself; so he followed up Naaman and told him lies, pretending that his master had sent him to ask for a part of the handsome fee which had so lately been refused. Naaman, rejoicing in his recovered health and new-found faith, was generous and unsuspicious. He pressed upon Gehazi twice as much as he had ventured to ask; and the wicked servant, having hidden his spoil, came into Elisha's presence as though nothing were amiss.

His master, with the ready perception of a true man of God, read his guilty secret. It was no use to utter the lie, "Thy servant went no whither. And he said unto him, Went not mine heart with thee, when the man turned again from his chariot to meet thee? Is it a time to receive money, and to receive garments, and olive-yards and vineyards, and sheep and oxen, and menservants and maidservants? The leprosy therefore of Naaman shall cleave unto thee, and unto thy seed for ever. And he went out from his presence a leper as white as snow." The punishment was startling, dramatic and severe; and it is one which reminds us that God deals with men in accordance with their opportunities; for one who had enjoyed Gehazi's opportunities of learning what truth and honour mean, was

fitly punished as a warning to others who might be tempted to a sin like that.

Perhaps the temptation to dishonesty and untruthfulness presses with special force on persons who are in Gehazi's position ; and our study of his character this afternoon will not be wasted if it makes us all resolve to be honest and true. In the leprosy with which he was punished we see a type of that leprosy of sin which as surely destroys the soul as physical leprosy destroys the body.

From Gehazi we turn to the happier subject of the little maiden who waited on Naaman's wife. She was, as I have already suggested, one who did not forget her religion when she was torn away from old associations and lived amongst the heathen. It is so easy to attend at any rate to the outward observances of religion when one lives amongst good people. It requires no effort on the part of a girl who is well brought up to be regular in church and Sunday school, so long as she is a child in her mother's house ; but if she goes out into service in some big house, where no one cares for Church, and Sunday is like other days, the force of bad example may be very great. Then she will need much courage to persevere in her own religious duties, and still more to speak up boldly for CHRIST in rebuking what is evil, or inviting the careless to attend the means of grace. It was this that the little maiden did when she prayed for her master, and spoke to her mistress. She knew the power of GOD, and

that the prophet's prayer prevailed, and so she said, "Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy."

Her faith and perseverance were rewarded; for what greater happiness can any one require than the happiness of bringing others to know God and escape from bodily and spiritual disease? Surely we ought to care far more than we do if other people round about us are suffering from the loathsome leprosy of deadly sin. If we know the means by which they may be healed, how can we bear to hold our peace and leave them to go on in misery and danger? If leprosy is loathsome, deadly sin is worse; and we are not real Christians at all, if we do nothing to arouse and startle sinners that they may be converted and live. A mission is a time when all of us may do something for others; we can all help to arouse the careless, to convert the sinful, and bring souls nearer to God. S. Bernard beautifully says there are three ways in which we may influence other souls. "Now abide these three: the word of exhortation, example, and prayer, but the greatest of these is prayer."

The word of exhortation may do something, a good example does more, but when we pray we touch directly the secret springs of conduct and bring into play the strongest force in the universe. If we really think about and pray for the conversion of souls with whom we are brought into contact, we shall find that in all sorts of

unexpected ways the time comes when we can say or do something which directly influences other lives. Prayer is always an act of faith; and yet when we pray we verify the promises of GOD so often, that even in this world the obvious answers to our prayers amount to a demonstration and confirmation of our faith.

There is yet another illustration in the same chapter of the relations which should subsist between master and servant. We read that when Naaman was told to wash in Jordan "he turned and went away in a rage." People often act like that when human pride rebels against the humility and simplicity of the Sacraments which GOD has ordained. Their very simplicity and apparent insignificance serve to test our faith and obedience. Naaman would have finally rejected the blessing which was within his reach if his affectionate and devoted servants had not said to him, "My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?"

If the heathen servants of Naaman so wisely intervened and induced their master to accept the gift of cleansing in a true spirit of humility, obedience, and faith, we may well believe that there are critical moments in many lives, when Christian servants may remind their masters of their allegiance to the one Master, CHRIST. Whether servants serve masters who are Christians or those who are not, S. Paul has laid down

the golden rule, "Let as many as are servants under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honour, that the Name of God and the doctrine be not blasphemed. And they that have believing masters, let them not despise them, because they are brethren; but rather do them service, because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit."

VIII

Esther

Address to Women

"*Who knoweth whether thou art not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?*"—Esther iv. 14.

THE Book of Esther differs from all the other books of the Bible in this. It has no mention of the Name of God. (I am speaking only of those portions of the book which are contained in the canonical Scriptures, for there are seven additional chapters included in the Apocrypha which are a very interesting addition to the story and do not share this peculiarity.)

Though the book does not seem particularly religious, it throws a flood of light on the history of the Jews during the Captivity, and it contains at least one lesson of supreme importance; it shows what a woman can do for the people of God, if she will use her powers of influence with courage and wisdom.

Certainly it is impossible to exaggerate the power for good or evil which God entrusts to a woman, especially when she is endowed with the gift of unusual beauty; and in some degree at least every woman possesses a talent which

she may either use to gratify herself, or to do good to others.

Let us briefly call to mind the circumstances under which a Jewish maiden became the most powerful person in the court of Ahasuerus, King of Persia. We cannot do that without expressing first a word of sympathy for Vashti, her discarded rival. All modest women will agree that the latter acted with commendable self-respect when she refused to display her beauty to the king and his courtiers at the banquet. If the king had not been very drunk, he would not have made a proposal so abhorrent to the queen. Vashti deserves all honour for her insistence on woman's rights. But her modesty cost her her place and her crown, for in the judgment of the Persian nobles she had set a dangerous precedent. "For this deed of the queen shall come abroad unto all women, to make their husbands contemptible in their eyes, when it shall be reported, The king Ahasuerus commanded Vashti the queen to be brought in before him, but she came not. . . . Let the king give her royal estate unto another that is better than she."

It was then that search was made throughout the king's dominion for the fairest maiden to take her place; and Esther, the niece and adopted daughter of Mordecai the Jew was chosen, for "the king loved Esther above all the women, and she obtained grace and favour in his sight more than all the virgins; so that he set the royal crown upon her head, and made her queen instead of Vashti."

It was a strange coincidence which placed upon the throne next the king a Jewish maiden just at a crisis in their national history, when the Jews sorely needed a powerful advocate. At that time the Jews had many enemies, and a plot was on foot to exterminate the race. The chosen people have always been hated; and even now in some nominally Christian lands, in spite of all that the world owes to their race, there are diabolical massacres and persecutions of the Jews. Let us see how they were saved by Esther's intercession. It was her uncle Mordecai who pressed upon the queen a difficult and dangerous duty. He would have her carry her life in her hand and approach the king to make supplication for her people. It was as dangerous for her to approach the king unbidden as it was for Vashti to refuse to come when she was summoned; so Esther tells her uncle—"All the king's servants, and the people of the king's provinces, do know, that whosoever, whether man or woman, shall come unto the king into the inner court, who is not called, there is one law for him, that he is put to death, except such to whom the king shall hold out the golden sceptre, that he may live: but I have not been called to come in unto the king these thirty days."

It was then that Mordecai insisted that it was Esther's duty to risk her crown and her life. A woman's beauty and power of influence are not given her only to purchase place and pleasure for

herself; they are talents to be used for GOD. "Who knoweth whether thou art not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

If there is no mention of GOD in this book there is at least a clear recognition of His providential ordering of the universe, and of the way in which individuals are called to respond to their vocation.

Esther rose to the occasion. In the canonical book there is no mention of her prayers, but only of a solemn three days' fast, in which she and her maidens on the one hand, and all the Jews on the other, were invited to join. The account in the appendix, being only found in Greek, is not included in the canonical Scriptures; but it is well worth reading:—

"All Israel cried out mightily, because their death was before their eyes. Queen Esther also, being seized as it were with the agony of death, resorted unto the LORD: and laid away her glorious apparel, and put on the garments of anguish and mourning: and instead of the most excellent ointments, she covered her head with ashes and dung, and she humbled her body greatly, and all the places of the ornaments of her joy she covered with her tangled hair. And she prayed unto the LORD, the GOD of Israel, saying, O my LORD, Thou only art our King; help me that am desolate and have no helper but Thee; for my danger is in mine hand."

The whole prayer as given in the Greek version breathes the spirit of piety and patriotism which

became a Jewish maiden. She protests her faith in the God of her fathers. She asks for courage, and for eloquent speech. She declares that she hates her royal dignity and associations with the enemies of her people :—"Thou knowest my necessity : that I abhor the sign of my high estate, which is upon mine head in the days wherein I show myself. I abhor it as a filthy rag, and I wear it not when I am private by myself. . . . Neither had Thine handmaid any joy since the day that I was brought hither to this present, but in Thee, O Lord, Thou God of Abraham."

The prayer was heard, and Esther met with complete success. We know how she found favour with the king, and how skilfully she turned the tables on the wicked Haman ; purchasing for her people not only deliverance from danger and death, but gladness and joy, of which the feast of Purim remained as a perpetual memorial.

Side by side with the story of Esther we may set another story, which is contained only in the Apocrypha. The story of Judith and Holofernes is, perhaps, only a novel, but it is a novel with a purpose ; and it served to impress on Jewish women that beauty is a talent which may be used for the glory of God and the extension of His kingdom. And these Bible stories are just what we need to enforce old-fashioned lessons of piety and courage and self-denial.

My sisters, just as surely as God called Esther to a position in which she might do good or harm, it is so with every one of you. Drift along with-

out a thought of anything beyond your own selfish pleasure, and you will find that your powers of influence are as quickly dissipated as the bloom of youthful beauty forsakes a pretty face. Use your powers of influence for high and holy purposes, resolve to make the world the better and the purer for your life; and if outward beauty fades you will find that its place is taken by that imperishable beauty, which indicates an unselfish and illuminated soul.

A woman's power to influence men for good is almost unlimited. You have heard of the cynic who never heard of a man doing something wrong or foolish without asking, "Who is she?" for he supposed that there was always a woman to lead the man astray; but I am inclined to ask the question with a very different expectation. If one sees a young man striving to live a pure and noble life, I am inclined to say, "Who is she?" meaning, what is the influence for good? Sometimes it is the holy mother or the loving sister whose prayerful expectation he dare not disappoint; sometimes it is that he is striving to be worthy of the girl whom he hopes to marry.

> "For indeed I knew
> Of no more subtle master under heaven
> Than is the maiden passion for a maid,
> Not only to keep down the base in man,
> But teach high thought, and amiable words
> And courtliness, and the desire of fame,
> And love of truth, and all that makes a man."
>
> TENNYSON, *Guinevere*.

It is not only when they claim the entire allegiance of a lover that good women make men good. It was said by one of her statesmen, after the death of Queen Victoria, that no one could ever tell how greatly this country had been blessed by the mere fact that for sixty years no responsible statesman had ever been able to propose in Parliament an important measure without previously submitting it to the severe scrutiny of a lady both good and wise. It would be well indeed for all men, whether in public or in private life, if they were compelled to make no important decision without being assured that it is one which a good woman would approve. There, my sisters, is your sphere of influence. I do not say that women are wrong to ask for votes, but I insist that they are already possessed of enormous power. It is that which makes it so utterly sad when women are frivolous and superficial; for when they fail to be true helpers to men, they never fail to drag them down.

I have spoken much about influence; let us be clear that in the last resort influence depends on personality, and personality means character. We need not deliberately seek to exercise an influence —we shall probably defeat our object if we do; but if we take heed to ourselves and strive to develop personality by continual resistance to evil and pursuit of good, we shall find ourselves becoming influential.

But for us Christians there is a deeper question still. The influence which we wish to exert is not

our own, but His Whose we are and Whom we serve. If we are really to make the world a better and a happier place, it must be because we make men realize the presence and power of JESUS. If men take knowledge of us that we have been with JESUS, we hope that they will go further and rest in Him alone. Like the Baptist we would say, "He must increase, but I must decrease." And so it often happens that those whose influence for good is most effective are, in their humility, unconscious of it. They will learn with glad surprise at the last day that their simple fidelity to CHRIST has been the means of drawing other souls to rest in His love.

IX

The Shulamite

Address to Young Women

"*My Beloved is mine, and I am His.*"
Song of Songs, ii. 16.

THE Song of Songs is very beautiful, but it is not easy to understand. There is only one passage which we read in church, and that provides a singularly appropriate lesson for Evensong on Easter Monday. When we have just passed from the gloom of Calvary to the joy of the Easter morning, and nature in the glorious beauty of the opening spring is in tune with the gladness of Christian hearts, it is delightful to hear—

"Lo, the winter is past,
The rain is over and gone;
The flowers appear on the earth;
The time of the singing of birds is come,
And the voice of the turtle is heard in our land;
The fig-tree ripeneth her green figs,
And the vines are in blossom,
They give forth their fragrance."

It is the time when happy lovers find their hearts overflowing with love for one another and for God.

And here in the Song of Songs we see that the Bible finds a place for human love. We cannot too often remind ourselves that the Bible is not a book, but a library. It contains not only doctrine and precept, but annals, history, proverbs, and romance. Nothing that is pure and innocent in human life has been excluded from GOD'S book. It is just because love has often been degraded and confused with lust, its hateful counterfeit, that we should vindicate for it a high and holy place.

The Song of Songs, no doubt, owes its place in the canon of Holy Scripture to the fact that a spiritual interpretation has been put upon it. In the headings to the chapters in the authorized version, we are taught to concentrate our attention on its allegorical meaning. The whole is taken as an expression of the mutual love between CHRIST and His Church. There is the best authority for treating love and marriage as a sign of the mystical union that is between CHRIST and His Church, and there is much in the Song of Songs which lends itself easily and naturally to this interpretation; but, before we look for allegories in Holy Scripture, we should try to understand the literal meaning.

Now when people examine the Song of Songs as a whole, they find that its main subject is love—the mutual love between man and woman which finds its consummation in marriage. Some have supposed it is merely a collection of love songs without any special story; but almost all who have

studied it carefully regard it as a drama in which two or more characters answer one another, and others intervene like the chorus in a Greek play.

Now those who regard it as a drama all agree in putting some of the speeches into the mouth of Solomon, and some into the mouth of the Shulamite, a country maiden whom he loved; and many were content to suppose that it referred only to the relation between these two.

But if so there is an ethical difficulty. How can we take as a type of pure and holy love the relations between such a one as Solomon and a girl whom he was seeking to add to his already overcrowded domestic establishment? We speak of the wisdom of Solomon, but we know that in the matter of love and marriage Solomon was neither wise nor holy. How can we take him as in this respect the representative of our LORD seeking the love of His Church? Happily there is another interpretation of the story, which we owe to the insight of modern scholars.

They tell us that the chief persons in the drama are not two but three. There is Solomon, but he is not the hero; for there is also the shepherd lover, whom the maiden really loves, and to whom she is pledged.

When Solomon offers the Shulamite a great position in his court—wealth, honour, and such base love as one could give who had already "seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines"—she will not listen to him, but repeats again and again, "My beloved

is mine, and I am his: he feedeth his flock among the lilies."

To understand the whole story in this way, we must suppose that the Shulamite had been carried away from her home in the country against her will. She complains bitterly that she has lost her home and her true love. Her brothers had made her a keeper of the vineyards, but her own vineyard she had not kept. "Tell me," she cries, "Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest thy flock." The ladies of Jerusalem tell her of the glories of Solomon and his court, but she replies that she cannot give up her shepherd. "I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awaken love, until it please." She means, of course, that true love cannot be forced.

Solomon makes love to her, praising her beauty and dwelling on her physical charms, while she can only think and speak of her absent lover and the innocent joys of her country home. A third time she repeats, "I am my beloved's, and his desire is toward me" (vii. 10).

In these words Solomon is finally repulsed; and the drama ends with a beautiful picture of the Shulamite at home once more. There she is greeted by the shepherds as she appears, "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?" and the triumph of true love is expressed in the noble words:

"Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm:
For love is strong as death;

Jealousy is cruel as the grave :
The flashes thereof are flashes of fire,
A very flame of the LORD.
Many waters cannot quench love,
Neither can the floods drown it :
If a man would give all the substance of his house for love,
He would utterly be contemned."

Now if this interpretation (which you will find worked out fully in Dr. Driver's *Literature of the Old Testament*) is correct, the Song of Songs contains a lesson which must appeal strongly to all good women. It shows what true love really means, when a girl is constant in spite of all the temptations that wealth and power can bring to lead her astray. My sisters, do not lightly pledge your troth ; be sure that the one who seeks your love is altogether worthy ; but when once you have given him your heart, let nothing tempt you to be forgetful or disloyal.

No doubt the Song of Songs must be read with care, and there are parts of it on which it would not be wise to dwell, especially for young people. Such may find that even the Bible is used by the devil to suggest wrong thoughts ; but the main lesson is one we must not miss, for it will help us to cultivate high and holy thoughts of love and marriage.

Now that we have found a wholesome lesson in the literal meaning of the book, we may safely pass on to that which is allegorical. Alike in the Old Testament and the New, the relation between GOD and His people, CHRIST and His Church,

are brought home to us under the image of wedded love. Isaiah says to Jerusalem "Thy Maker is thine husband" (liv. 5), and, "As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee" (lxii. 5). So the prophet Hosea, who married a worthless woman, was taught by the shame and sorrow of his own life to feel as God felt for the apostasy of His people. All sin and rebellion against God is a kind of spiritual fornication or adultery. If this was clear in the Old Testament, it is clearer in the New, for there we read that "Christ loved the Church, and gave Himself up for it" (*Eph.* v. 25).

"From Heav'n He came and sought her,
To be His holy bride:
With His own Blood He bought her,
And for her life He died."

But Christ is not only the Bridegroom of the Church, He is the Lover and the Husband of the soul; and those who are aiming at a life of consecration may dare to say—

"Jesu, Lover of my soul,
Let me to Thy bosom fly,"

or,

"Jesus! my Shepherd, *Husband*, Friend."

There is a danger, no doubt, in using such expressions of affection, and they are very unsuitable on the lips of careless and worldly people; but some may venture with reverence and humility to apply to our Lord what the Shulamite applies to her lover. It is of Him we

say, "My Beloved is mine, and I am His." To Him we say, "Set me as a seal upon Thine heart."

If the modern interpretation of the book be right, Solomon must stand for this world, with its wealth and pride and sensuality, seeking to draw our hearts away from Him to Whom we are pledged; and the lesson remains that the measure of our resistance to evil is the measure of our love to CHRIST.

If we really love our LORD JESUS CHRIST, we shall dread nothing so much as separation from Him. One thing, and one only, can come between us and Him, and that is sin. Deadly sin breaks the tie between our souls and GOD, and even venial sin hinders the freedom and happiness of our intercourse with Him. And so we lay to heart the Psalmist's words, "O ye that love the LORD, see that ye hate the thing that is evil" (*Ps.* xcvii. 10). And if we really love Him with all our hearts, we shall desire to enter into the closest possible union and communion with Him. Well, He has instituted and ordained us holy mysteries as pledges of His love. We may measure our devotion to our LORD, not only by our hatred of evil, but by our desire to draw near again and again with growing frequency and regularity to the Holy Feast in which He gives us Himself. It is the Blessed Sacrament of the Body and Blood of CHRIST which completes that union for which we were made and in which our happiness consists.

Let me close with the glowing words of the old English homily:

"This much we must be sure to hold, that in the Supper of the LORD there is no vain ceremony, no bare sign, no untrue figure of a thing absent. But, as the Scripture saith, the table of the LORD, the bread and cup of the LORD, the memory of CHRIST, the annunciation of His death, yea, the communion of the Body and Blood of the LORD, in a marvellous incorporation, which by the operation of the HOLY GHOST (the very bond of our conjunction with CHRIST) is through faith wrought in the souls of the faithful, whereby not only their souls live to eternal life, but they surely trust to win to their bodies a resurrection to immortality. The true understanding of this fruition and union, which is betwixt the body and the Head, betwixt the true believer and CHRIST, the ancient catholic fathers, both perceiving themselves and commending to their people, were not afraid to call this supper —some of them, the salve of immortality and sovereign preservative against death; other, a deifical communion; other, the sweet dainties of our Saviour, the pledge of eternal health, the defence of faith, the hope of the resurrection; other, the food of immortality, the healthful grace, and the conservatory of everlasting life."

So, then, we pledge ourselves to resist every enticement to what is evil, we reject everything that is inconsistent with our supreme affection, as we take the words of the Shulamite and say to our LORD, "My Beloved is mine, and I am His."

X

Phœbe and Priscilla

Address to Church Workers

"*I commend unto you Phœbe our sister, who is a servant of the Church which is at Cenchreæ: that ye receive her in the Lord, worthily of the saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever matter she may have need of you: for she herself also hath been a succourer of many, and of mine own self. Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus: who have for my life laid down their own necks.*"—Rom. xvi. 1–4.

THE last chapter of the Epistle to the Romans is a kind of postscript or appendix to that wonderful book. It seems, at first sight, of very little importance compared with the rest of that great body of dogmatic theology to which it is attached—merely a string of names of obscure individuals, whose only importance arises from the fact that they were, at one time, friends and companions of S. Paul.

But when we look a little closer we notice that it tells us much about the mind and heart of the Apostle; it reveals the tenderness and depth of

his affections and the value that he placed on the practice of intercessory prayer. What a family of spiritual children were brought before GOD in his daily prayers! how he remembered the special needs of each, and illustrated the great truth he had taught elsewhere that "we, being many, are one body in CHRIST, and every one members one of another"! (*Rom.* xii. 5).

But the special interest of our text lies in the fact that here are brought before us two distinct types of workers in the Church of GOD. There is Phœbe the consecrated virgin, wholly set apart as a sister or deaconess for the service of our LORD and His Church; there are Aquila and Priscilla, the married couple, no less useful and no less devoted.

(1) In the case of Phœbe it was necessary to ask for a special welcome and recognition from the Christians at Rome, for the idea of employing a woman in such a fashion was strange and unfamiliar; and the Apostle must tell them how useful she had been to himself and many others. She must be received in a way that was worthy of her saintly character, and assisted in whatever business she might need their help.

It is strange that after nineteen hundred years it should still be necessary to ask Christian people to recognize and welcome the ministry of consecrated women as a valuable—and sometimes indispensable—instrument of Church work. Thank GOD there is a growing recognition of the blessings that have come from the work

of sisters and deaconesses. So far as women are concerned, the revival of the religious life is so well established that it scarcely needs apology or defence. The Sisterhoods at Wantage, Clewer, and many others have proved conclusively the value of consecrated women in education, in nursing, and, above all, in the rescue of the fallen and the care of the penitent; and those devoted women prove that the Church of England has not lost the power to evoke self-sacrifice.

But still there are places where prejudice dies hard, and the very idea of consecrated virginity is unknown. Let me tell my own experience. Many years ago when I was in charge of a poor parish, consisting entirely of the working class, we greatly needed the help of devoted women. I applied to several of the leading Sisterhoods asking them to send sisters to work in the parish. In each case they replied that it was impossible, but that they would gladly have helped if only the supply of sisters had been equal to the demand. In one case I expressed my disappointment and asked the Reverend Mother, why, considering the number of unemployed women on the one hand, and the need for their services on the other, the supply of sisters was so short. She answered, "It is because priests don't preach the religious life." Her words went home, and I reflected, that perhaps this is because they do not attempt to live it; and so, unconsciously, she helped me to realize my own

vocation in the Community of the Resurrection to which it is my happiness to belong. Since then I have tried to put before congregations like this that our LORD is calling some women, as He did of old, to give up the thought of home-life and marriage, and, above all, the love of their own way, that they may serve Him without distraction and be wholly devoted to the service of the Church.

This is not the time to unfold the deeper meaning of the religious life; but if there are those here to-day who are free to hear and receive the call, they may easily learn what it means, and put themselves to the test. Here, and now, I will only say, women are not wanted in the religious life because they have been disappointed in love, or because they cannot get on at home, or because they chiefly want to save their own souls; but they are welcome if they are drawn by the special love to JESUS, and desire to say to Him, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of Thee."

The religious life may very likely take a different form under the changed conditions of modern days; but its essence lies in the voluntary choice of poverty, chastity, and obedience to a rule, springing out of love to JESUS, confirmed by a vow or, at least, the profession of permanent fidelity.

Whatever may have been the case in the distant past, I believe that many men and women

amongst ourselves are conscious of a call to the religious life, because they are deeply dissatisfied with the social conditions of our time, and believe that the glaring contrast between the idleness and luxury of the rich and the abject misery of many of the poor cannot be in accordance with the Will of God. They desire to do something to reproduce that happier state of things recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, where we read that "the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul; neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own" (iv. 32). Religious communities recall the ideal of that early Christian society in which the resources of the rich were made available to the uttermost to meet the necessities of the poor; and they exhibit a form of Christian Socialism, which is based on the example of our Lord and the inspiration of the Holy Ghost.

The call to the religious life, in the technical sense, is only meant for the few. Most men and women have their work in the world to do, and they do it best under the ordinary conditions of family and social life. So S. Paul said, "I desire that the younger women marry, bear children, rule the household" (1 *Tim.* v. 14), and most of us may well say—

> "We need not bid, for cloistered cell,
> Our neighbour and our work farewell,
> Nor strive to wind ourselves too high
> For sinful man beneath the sky:

> The trivial round, the common task,
> Would furnish all we ought to ask;
> Room to deny ourselves; a road
> To bring us, daily, nearer God."

But when the call of God comes to a woman to devote herself to the religious life, her relations and friends should no more strive to hold her back than they would wish to hold her back from some happy marriage, because it involved separation from her kindred and her father's house.

(2) In the case of Aquila and Priscilla, of whom S. Paul speaks with such gratitude and affection, we see the other type of devoted Church workers. We know something of their work from the Acts of the Apostles. They were weavers, tent-makers by trade, and S. Paul lodged at their house and shared their toil during his stay at Corinth. It was, doubtless, at that time that he taught them the faith of Jesus Christ so fully that they were able to teach others also. We know how they dealt with Apollos. As that fervent and eloquent teacher expounded the Gospel, so far as he understood it, in the synagogue at Ephesus, others might have thought his preaching complete and satisfactory; but Aquila and Priscilla felt that he was leaving out elements of the Faith which S. Paul had taught them to regard as essential. "They took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more carefully," with the result that his capacity for usefulness was infinitely enhanced.

It is a memorable instance of the way in which the really instructed Church worker can deal effectively with those earnest and excellent men who preach a partial Gospel in ignorance of the Catholic Faith. It is no part of our business to silence, or disparage the work of Christian teachers whose Gospel is incomplete. Rather we should rejoice in their zeal and earnestness, and welcome every word that they utter so far as it is true ; but, if we profit by the example of Aquila and Priscilla, we shall never miss an opportunity of leading partially instructed teachers on to a fuller grasp of the Faith in its entirety.

Before we leave Aquila and Priscilla we ought to notice that from the way in which the couple are generally mentioned, it is obvious that the wife was the more influential of the two ; and probably she, rather than her husband, was the instructor of Apollos. This has led to Dr. Harnack's ingenious and interesting suggestion, that she was the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews. That wonderful book must have been written by some one like Apollos ; and of course it is possible that she, who was the link between him and S. Paul, was responsible for it.

But we are chiefly concerned with the practical lesson to be learned from their lives. The faith of Jesus Christ spreads when Christian men and women, living and working in the world, use their opportunities to bring all whom they can influence to accept the Faith. To do so they need not only zeal and devotion, but an adequate

knowledge of all that GOD has taught, by His Holy Word and by His Holy Church.

At the close of a mission one greatly longs to see a "band of men [and women] whose hearts GOD has touched," ready to carry on the work. If laymen and women can and do help in and during a mission by bringing others to the services, they are needed even more when a mission is over for the ordinary pastoral work of the Church. There are children to be taught, sick people to be comforted and helped, new converts to be strengthened and stablished in the Faith, and penitents who need encouragement and loving sympathy. For all this, let me insist once more, we need not only the consecrated devotion of a deaconess, or a sister, like Phœbe, but the loyalty and self-sacrifice of men and women who, like Aquila and Priscilla, would lay down their lives for CHRIST'S sake and the Gospel's, because they have thoroughly grasped its full significance.

XI

Bought with a Price

Sermon to the Women's Help Society at the Annual Service in S. Paul's Cathedral, May 29, 1893

"*Ye are not your own; for ye were bought with a price: glorify God therefore in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.*"—1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.

WE meet to-night as associates, members, and friends of the Women's Help Society, to join in a united act of prayer and praise, and to give thanks to Almighty God for the blessing that has rested on us in the fruitful progress of another year.

You will not expect me to-night to dwell on the reasons which led to the formation of our Society. On an occasion like this, we are all conscious of the strength which comes from fellowship with others, who are fighting the same battle against the world, the flesh, and the devil, exposed to the same temptations, but

strengthened and upheld by the grace of the same Holy Spirit.

The principle that "union is strength," that we can help one another by mutual prayer and sympathy, is clearly understood. I need not dwell long to-night on those distinctive principles which make our Society unlike others which aim at somewhat similar objects; but in this place one cannot but remember that our foundress had the sympathy and counsel of that great preacher whose name will always be associated with the pulpit of S. Paul's.

Dr. Liddon regarded this Society as a true handmaid of the Church, because it seemed to him that our rules were in harmony with the fundamental principles of the Gospel.

First, you are pledged to the uttermost to strive after that purity of body and soul which befits those who are made in the image of God, bought with the Blood of Christ, and are being sanctified by the Holy Spirit. Our members and associates, sometimes in circumstances of great difficulty, are striving to win the blessing of the pure in heart to whom it is promised that they shall see God. And we feel that Christian purity, though it may be aided by public opinion or by self-respect, is only safe when it is rooted and grounded in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore we welcome those, *and only those*, who are willing to share with us some simple rule of life. Our members must be baptized, or at least candidates for Holy Baptism; they must at least

be looking forward to Confirmation, and the life of union with our Redeemer through the precious Sacrament of His Body and His Blood.

Again, though we must be strict in excluding from our membership those who fall into the sins which bring shame and disgrace upon the name of woman—so long as they are impenitent and unbelieving, a source of contagion to others whom they would make as wretched as themselves—we do *not* refuse to welcome back the penitent. There is a place amongst us, not only for those who have always kept their innocence, but for those whom the love of JESUS has drawn to His feet,

> "that they may prove,
> Forgiven greatly, how they greatly love."

I say, then, that Dr. Liddon approved of our Society because it magnifies the grace of GOD, and because it leaves to those who have sinned and are sorry a place of repentance and a hope of renewal.

With these thoughts in my mind, I was led to choose as a text to-night those words in which S. Paul appeals to the Christians of Corinth to walk worthily of their high vocation. They are not free to live as they please and do what they like. They are responsible to Him Who redeemed them; therefore he says: "Ye are not your own; for ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify GOD in your body, and in your spirit, which are GOD'S."

Now this might well be the motto of the

Women's Help Society; and I think it will at least serve to suggest those practical lessons which I am to enforce to-night.

When we read the letters of S. Paul, it is always well to bear in mind the condition of those to whom he wrote, and in this case we should turn to Acts xviii. There we are told how S. Paul came to Corinth in the course of his second missionary journey. Corinth was a great seaport town, famous for its wealth, its luxury, its sin. When we look in the map of Greece, we notice that Corinth stood on the narrow neck of land which joins its northern and southern parts; and so by reason of its geographical position Corinth became a great commercial centre; for much of the merchandise passing from East to West—from Asia towards Rome—was unshipped at the Eastern port, transferred across the city, and then sent down the Corinthian gulf.

On this account the people of Corinth grew rich, and with riches there was the usual coincidence of luxury and sin. Even amongst the heathen, Corinth had an evil reputation for one special kind of sin—the sin of impurity. There was a proverb which implied that to go to Corinth was to plunge into a life of sinful dissipation.

Such was the city into which the Apostle entered, determined to know nothing save Jesus Christ and Him crucified. We are told in the Acts that he lodged there with a working man and his wife, named Aquila and Priscilla. They and he were tent-makers by trade; and as he sat beside them at

the weaver's bench, he taught them the Gospel in such a way that they were able afterwards to teach others also.

S. Paul entered week by week into the Jewish synagogue, and tried first to persuade the Jews that JESUS was the CHRIST. For the most part the attempt was a failure, though Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed in the LORD with all his house.

When the Apostle found that the Jews rejected his message, he made the offer of the Gospel to the Gentile population who were sunk in idolatry and sin. What kind of people they were we may learn from the same chapter of this Epistle, where he reminds the Christians to whom he writes what some of them once had been.

"Know ye not," he says, "that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of GOD? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers . . . nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of GOD." It is, indeed, a black catalogue of sin, but he adds: "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the Name of the LORD JESUS, and by the Spirit of our GOD."

What was it that wrought so great a change? How had these idolatrous and degraded Corinthians been turned from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto GOD? Once they were what the Apostle described; now he can speak of them as saints who come behind in no good gift,

who are enriched in all utterance and in all knowledge. He tells us plainly what had wrought the change. "I determined not to know any thing among you, save JESUS CHRIST, and Him crucified."

My sisters, we know something of a similar transformation. The records of our Society could tell of women and girls who were once sinful and degraded; and then some one told them the same story that S. Paul told at Corinth eighteen centuries ago—just the story of JESUS CHRIST and Him crucified, and as they heard it the HOLY SPIRIT touched their hearts; they felt ashamed and sorry, and they, too, became living, fruitful members of the Church of GOD. We can well imagine how lovingly the Apostle watched over the converts, who were the visible tokens of the power of the Gospel.

He remained eighteen months at Corinth, long enough to establish the work and leave behind him a living branch of the Church of GOD, organized and equipped with all that was necessary for its continuous growth. He passed on to preach the Gospel elsewhere, and to plant the Church in other cities. From time to time he heard from his friends at Corinth of the progress of those whom he left behind; and, as we have seen, there was much to gladden his heart. He can say: "I thank my GOD always on your behalf for the grace of GOD which is given you by JESUS CHRIST," but, on the other hand, there was much to make him sad and anxious.

He hears that there is division in the Church. The Christian people, who ought to have been all one in the Body of CHRIST, formed sects and parties, calling themselves by the name of this or that favourite teacher. There was the party of Cephas, the party of Paul, the party of Apollos; and some even called themselves by the name of CHRIST in an exclusive sense, as though they, and they only, had the right to the Christian name.

The Apostle writes to tell them how wrong all this is. It is a sign that they are carnal. "Whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?"

It is all due to the fact that they think too much of individual teachers, and too little of the message that they bring and the office that they bear. "Who then," he says, "is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the LORD gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but GOD gave the increase."

But further, the Apostle had heard that there had appeared in the Corinthian Church not only division and wrong views about the ministry, but that there was also grave moral corruption. Perhaps it was not very surprising that some of the Christians at Corinth should slip back into the old heathen sins. We all know how great is the danger of relapse. When we become true disciples of JESUS CHRIST, very likely we have still to live

in the midst of old temptations; the evil world is still round about us, there remains the taint of our own evil nature, the powerful force of habit; and perhaps we are exposed more than ever to the special onslaught of the evil one.

In all this, I say, there is nothing surprising, nothing for which we ought not to be prepared. So, if S. Paul had heard of one or another isolated case of failure and relapse, though he would have felt sorrow, as the good shepherd feels sorrow for one lost sheep, or the careful housewife for one lost coin; though he would have spared no effort to recover such a one, it would not have caused the special sorrow and disappointment which led him to write so earnestly in this Epistle.

The worst of it was that when a Christian went astray and fell into a hateful vice which would have brought disgrace upon a heathen—the worst of it was, the others did not seem to care. They allowed the wicked person to continue in their company, to join in their services, and even be a partaker of the LORD'S Table.

There were not only divisions, wrong views about the ministry, and moral corruption; there was such lack of discipline in the Church, that the obligation of Christian holiness was forgotten, and the whole Body of CHRIST became tainted and corrupt.

My sisters, there are similar dangers amongst ourselves!

Your Society and another like it were formed mainly to raise the tone of public opinion; to

remind Christian women that chastity is of supreme importance ; to insist that we cannot tolerate evil deeds, or even evil speech, in Christians, without dishonour to our LORD. Would to GOD it were possible for working girls in London to be ignorant of the corruption that is in the world through lust !

Alas ! you know too well of those who were once innocent and pure. They have been led astray. Perhaps some one who professed to love them took advantage of their weakness, and with the promise of marriage robbed them of their chastity. Perhaps they were led astray because the prospect of a life of sinful pleasure was more attractive than the scanty wages and the dreary drudgery of honest work.

Ah, we know the force of temptation, and we might easily multiply excuses for the fallen, but we must remember that the loss of chastity is an irreparable loss ; and we must resolve to treat those who trifle with this virtue or make a jest of what is evil, in the way that S. Paul told the Corinthians they must treat the man who brought disgrace upon them all.

He says, "Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump ?" They must exclude from their company the man who had fallen. He says they must aid him in maintaining the discipline of the Church. "For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed, in the Name of our LORD

Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus."

It seems frightfully severe, and perhaps you will think I contradict what I said was the distinctive excellence of our Society. No; let us not forget that the Apostle wrote a second letter full of tenderness and love, bidding the Corinthians restore to his place the one who had fallen, when he had shown all the signs of a genuine repentance.

My sisters, we too must act like that. We must be ready to help and restore the penitent; but we must determine to be as severe as we can with all those who profess to be Christians, and yet do not aim at Christian holiness.

Of course it is not possible to avoid altogether the society of the wicked. S. Paul explains that he does not mean that Christians must go out of the world altogether. In London to-day, as in Corinth eighteen centuries ago, Christians have to earn their daily bread, and work side by side with those who do not recognize the same standard of holiness. We cannot help that; we must do our duty and set a good example to those who are without.

There is no more exquisite symbol of Christian purity than the fair white arum lily with which we deck the altars of our churches. She tosses her beautiful head towards heaven, but her roots are

down in the dark, damp mud. Even so the purity most precious in the sight of GOD is not that of those whose lives are sheltered from the very knowledge of evil, but the purity of those who know evil only to hate it—who look up to GOD, and are strengthened by His grace in the midst of dangerous and difficult surroundings. You cannot escape from temptation ; you need not desire to do so when the temptations arise in the midst of necessary and inevitable duties. But you must avoid all wilful running into danger, you must seek for such sympathy and support as your membership in this Society will surely give.

The Women's Help Society has a twofold mission. First, it supplies the means of protection, encouragement, and support to its own members, who are cheered by each other's sympathy and aided by each other's prayers. But, secondly, it is a witness to those who are without. It may be the means of creating a better tone of public opinion in many a factory and workshop. It is at once a witness to the beauty and the honour of purity ; it points to the unfailing source of strength.

My sisters, if you are true to the promises you have made, if you fulfil the hopes of those who led you to join the Society, you will be, wherever you go, the witnesses of JESUS CHRIST.

If you are modest and gentle, and humble, and loving, and true, men will take knowledge of you that you have been with JESUS. They will see in you the reflection of His holiness ; they will learn from your example the power of His grace. It

was to those who had to live in circumstances not unlike our own that S. Paul appealed in the language of our text.

Knowing what they had been, what by GOD's grace they had become, by what temptations they were surrounded, S. Paul in one word sums up the extent of Christian obligation, and appeals to an all-prevailing motive, "Ye are not your own"—your life, your character, your time, your opportunities, your body, your spirit, belong to Another. You are His, not only because He made you, but because you are bought with a price.

My sisters, there come to all of us dark days when temptation is strong, when the heart is weary and courage dies down, and we are half inclined to give up the struggle and live as though we were accountable to no one but ourselves. In those days it is well to remember that we were bought with a price. In the hour of depression and in the stress of temptation, let us kneel before some picture of our dear Redeemer on the Cross, let us think of the precious Blood that poured from His hands and feet and side. That is the price of our redemption; that is the reason why we must try again. Remember Whose we are, and Whom we are pledged to serve. Again and again we will pray:

> O Saviour of the world, Who by Thy Cross and precious Blood hast redeemed us, save us, and help us, we humbly beseech Thee, O LORD.

Part II

NOTES OF RETREAT ADDRESSES

ON

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

CARLTON, SEPT. 16–21, 1906

Collect for Ascension Day

Grant, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, that like as we do believe Thy only-begotten Son our Lord Jesus Christ to have ascended into the heavens; so we may also in heart and mind thither ascend, and with Him continually dwell, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end. Amen.

Notes of Retreat Addresses on

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

I. Introductory

"*Having then a great High Priest, Who hath passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we have not a High Priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but one that hath been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and may find grace to help us in time of need.*"—Heb. iv. 14–16, R.V.

ONCE more, through the mercy of God, we are allowed to meet in retreat, to spend a few days in meditation and prayer and uninterrupted communion with God. We are very familiar with the meaning and value of a retreat, and we believe that it is founded on the precept and example of our Lord. On His example—for again and again in His own earthly life and ministry He sought retirement for the refreshment of His human spirit, for unbroken com-

munion with the FATHER, for preparation for His future work. On His precept—for He said to His disciples, "Come ye yourselves apart and rest awhile." It is, then, in response to His invitation that we come, like those first disciples, to gather ourselves together unto JESUS and tell Him what we have done, and what we have taught. And we come back to this place as to a spiritual home, where we have found many blessings in former years. This church is associated for many of us with some of the best moments in our lives. Here we have sought and found the blessing of pardon and peace; here we have gained a deeper insight into spiritual things; here we have made and renewed many a good resolution.

Our first thoughts, then, are of gratitude to GOD for mercies in the past and for this fresh opportunity, and gratitude to those who give us such a loving welcome here for His sake; but secondly come thoughts of shame and sorrow that we have so largely failed to keep our former resolutions, or maintain the spiritual level to which we were raised in some former retreat. How soon we slip back! How different is our outlook on the world in the midst of our ordinary life from that to which we have sometimes attained in this place! Perhaps, in spite of warnings and resolves, we have fallen again into serious or deadly sin.

Well, even if the worst has happened, GOD has not cast us off. There is still the "fountain

open for sin and for uncleanness." There is mercy with the Saviour, there is healing in His Blood. We have prayed for perseverance, and our very presence here is a proof that the prayer has been answered ; for we should not have come unless we were still looking in the right direction, and still aiming at a high standard of Christian life. We have not lost our confidence in JESUS, nor in the validity of His Word and Sacraments.

We set before ourselves once more the old familiar objects of retreat, believing that GOD has called us here that we may strive (1) to confirm our faith ; (2) to deepen our penitence ; (3) to kindle our love ; (4) to realize our vocation ; (5) to regulate our life.

And this year let us take for our meditations the Epistle to the Hebrews. We cannot, of course, attempt any complete exposition of the book ; but we will try to read the whole and gather out some special subjects suitable for meditation, not only in retreat but in the months which follow. The subjects which naturally suggest themselves are these :—The idea of revelation ; the universality of sin ; the unseen world and the ministry of angels ; the Person of our LORD ; the meaning of priesthood ; the Tabernacle and Holy Communion ; the idea of perfection ; the Communion of Saints ; the secret of perseverance.

It may seem that the Epistle to the Hebrews is better adapted to provide the subjects of a retreat

for priests than for women; but all believers have a share in the priesthood of the Church, and women may be expected to take a special interest in the book if Professor Harnack is right in his interesting suggestion that the author was Priscilla.

Dr. Westcott has said in the preface to his great commentary on this book, "No work in which I have ever been allowed to spend many years of continuous labour has had for me the same intense human interest as the study of the Epistle to the Hebrews."

We may be sure that Dr. Westcott did not forget the Gospel and Epistles of S. John; but it seems that he found in the Epistle to the Hebrews something still more applicable to our present needs. However much we love to linger over the record of what our Saviour said, and did, and suffered long ago, it is essential that we should think of Him as "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever" (*Heb.* xiii. 8).

We need not discuss the question of the authorship of the Epistle. It is almost certain that the author was not S. Paul, for though there is nothing inconsistent with the substance of his theology, the tone and language are not Pauline. Luther guessed that it was the work of Apollos, and certainly the little that we know of him from the Acts suggests that he was the sort of man to write it; and if not Apollos, it may be that Dr. Harnack was right in suggesting that wonderful woman, who, with her husband Aquila, taught Apollos the way of God more perfectly. Nothing

turns on the question of the writer, and perhaps our ignorance may only serve to assure us of its divine inspiration. We cannot question that the ultimate author was the HOLY GHOST.

Its date and destination are much more important, for if we realize the condition of those to whom it was addressed we shall see the resemblance between their circumstances and our own.

It was probably written, then, just before the destruction of Jerusalem (A.D. 70), and addressed to a body of Hebrew Christians dwelling in or near Jerusalem. They had definitely accepted the faith of CHRIST, but they were deeply attached to the Temple and its services, and they clung tenaciously to the old ways—and now S. James was dead ; Jerusalem was surrounded by Roman armies ; the Temple was about to be destroyed ; the prophecies of our LORD recorded by S. Matthew were on the eve of fulfilment ; the old order was breaking up ; and the Hebrews were perplexed, and weary, and in danger of drifting away from their faith. It was a period of transition, in which some eagerly welcomed change, some timidly clung to the past, and all were in a state of uncertainty and suspense.

The same conditions are reproduced whenever "the old order changeth, giving place to new," when trusted leaders are withdrawn and new problems emerge, as they surely are doing to-day. The Epistle to the Hebrews was written, then, to fix men's attention on the unchanging CHRIST,

and to save those who were in danger of drifting away.

The main purpose of the Epistle is admirably expressed by Primasius, an old commentator from whom Dr. Westcott largely quotes :—"The whole intention of the blessed Apostle in the epistle is to cause the Jews his kinsmen to pass from the law of Moses to the grace of CHRIST, from carnal to spiritual observance, and to mark the pre-eminence of grace given by the SON to the faithful over the legal shadows, which were shown by the ministry of angels."

Some of us, as we come into retreat are specially conscious of our own danger of weariness and our own tendency to drift. Let us lay to heart at once the warning in Hebrews ii. 1 : "We ought to give the more earnest heed to the things that were heard, lest haply we drift away from them." The Greek is wrongly translated in the A.V., "lest at any time we should let them slip." As Dr. Westcott points out, "The idea is not that of simple forgetfulness, but of being swept along past the sure anchorage which is within reach. The image is singularly expressive. We are all continuously exposed to the action of currents of opinion, habit, action, which tend to carry us away insensibly from the position which we ought to maintain."

In danger of drifting, let us fly for refuge "to lay hold of the hope set before us ; which we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and entering into that which is within

the veil; whither as a forerunner JESUS entered for us, having become a high priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek."

As we prepare this evening for our first Communion in retreat, let us remember that the keynote of this Epistle, as it is the central part of our Eucharistic worship, is *Sursum corda*. In all weariness, perplexity, danger and temptation, our one source of refreshment, counsel, safety, help, is in our risen and ascended LORD.

Notes of Retreat Addresses on

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

II. Revelation

"*God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in His Son, Whom He appointed heir of all things, through Whom also He made the worlds; Who being the effulgence of His glory, and the very image of His substance, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had made purification of sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.*"—Heb. i. 1–3, R.V.

LET us begin our meditation this morning by an act of adoration, worshipping Christ our Lord as Prophet, Priest, and King. We fall low on our knees before His footstool and acknowledge that He is the Prophet Who reveals the mind and will of God; the Priest Who offers the availing Sacrifice for sin, and reconciles men with God; the King to Whom is given all might, majesty, dominion and power.

We have seen that the Epistle to the Hebrews

was written to console and stimulate those who were passing through a time of trial and transition. Though the holy city is surrounded by her foes, though the Temple and its services are passing away, the divine purpose is being fulfilled, and the true centre of Christian worship is untouched.

We begin, then, by meditating on the great fact of a divine revelation, and we mark the contrast between the gradual, partial, and imperfect revelation of the Old Testament and the final absolute revelation of the New. We must consider both the resemblance and the difference. Both come from GOD. The opening sentence of the Epistle excludes at once the notion that the Old Testament is merely the record of man's attempt to find GOD. "GOD spake in the prophets."

It is important to insist on this, in view of a recent attempt to draw a distinction between objective and subjective revelation—meaning by objective the communication of truth that comes to a mind through the phenomenal world, and by subjective that which comes through personality. Dr. Sanday has pointed out, in a criticism of Canon Wilson's essay in the recent volume of *Cambridge Theological Essays*, that when we say GOD spake by the prophets, we mean that He was acting upon their minds from within, and so the proposed distinction between objective and subjective revelation is misleading.

But before the coming of CHRIST, GOD's revelation of His mind and will was "by divers

portions and in divers manners," and through imperfect agents who were not competent to understand Him fully, and the truth was only made known gradually as men were able to bear it. S. Ambrose has expressed the relation between the two volumes of the one revealed religion in a memorable sentence: "In the Old Testament lies hid the New; in the New Testament the Old comes out clear." It is on this account that we must not be surprised to find in the Old Testament religious and moral standards, which, in the light of the fuller revelation, are seen to be defective and even false. It is impossible to say how much the cause of true religion has suffered from the failure to recognize this. It has often been the fashion to quote any text from any part of the Bible as though it had for all times, and for all sorts of people, the same validity.

The necessary correction is supplied in Dr. Temple's famous essay on the "Education of the World," but the true point of view was expressed by the Fathers of the Church long ago, notably by S. Gregory Nazianzen,[1] and by S. Chrysostom. The latter says, "Do not ask how these Old Testament precepts can be good when the need for them is past; ask how they were good when the period required them, or, rather, if you wish, do inquire into their merit even now. It is still conspicuous, and lies in nothing so much as what now enables us to find

[1] *Oratio* xxxi. 25.

fault with them. Their highest praise is that we now see them to be defective. If they had not trained us well so that we became susceptible of higher things we should not have seen this insufficiency."

Many similar passages may be found in the Fathers,[1] but it is enough that our LORD Himself has taught us in the Sermon on the Mount to criticize the Old Testament standard, for instance, in the matter of the law of marriage, and the law of revenge.

In contrast with the Old Testament, the revelation of JESUS CHRIST is final and absolute; but to say that is not to assert that it has as yet been fully understood and appropriated by the Church or by ourselves. Our LORD said, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He shall guide you into all the truth" (*S. John* xvi. 12, 13).

Looking back over the long course of the Church's history, we see how very gradually Christian people have appropriated principles which we now feel are essentially Christian. Within the last two hundred years good Christian people justified slavery, and the very idea of toleration is of quite modern growth. From their attitude towards the backward races of mankind, and the poorer classes of the community at home, it often seems as though many Christians have much to learn of the real meaning of what CHRIST

[1] *Ad Jud.* iv. 6.

revealed. Probably we are tolerating many things to-day which our descendants will condemn as decisively as we condemn the burning of heretics, or the use of slaves.

It has been well said that the chief hindrance to conversion is the belief that we are already converted; so, too, it may well be that the chief hindrance to the acceptance of revealed truth is the belief that we have already received or discovered as much as God means us to know. You will remember that in Fogazzaro's great novel, when the saint secured an interview with the Pope, he insisted that amongst the four great evils which afflict the Church is the spirit of immovability.

It is not only the Church of Rome which suffers from a blind adhesion to the past and a mistaken reverence for tradition. There are, of course, fundamental questions on which the appeal to the past is necessary, but we are false to the very idea of revelation, if we do not believe that the Holy Spirit is still guiding the Church and leading us to a fuller apprehension of the mind of Christ.

An American Roman Catholic[1] has well said: "If we hope to commend and enforce truths with efficacious power, we must be prepared to do so in the full blaze of the light which research and discovery have poured upon nature and the history of man. If, in consequence, we find it necessary to abandon positions which are no longer defen-

[1] Archbishop Spalding.

sible, to assume new attitudes in the face of new conditions, we must remember that though the Church is a divine institution, it is none the less subject to the law which makes human things mutable."

The idea of a gradual revelation to the Church and to the individual soul suggests a duty, which we all acknowledge to be of paramount importance. It is to most of us a difficult duty, and we come into retreat that we may learn to do it better. Whatever we may do at ordinary times we will try now so to meditate upon the Word of GOD, in humble dependence upon the HOLY GHOST, that He may open to us the hidden treasures. We must put ourselves into the attitude of expectation and desire, as we say again and again such words as these: "LORD, open Thou mine eyes, that I may see wondrous things in Thy law"; "Send out Thy light and Thy truth that they may lead me, and bring me to Thy holy hill"; "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be always acceptable in Thy sight, O LORD, my Strength and my Redeemer."

III. Sin

"*Take heed, brethren, lest haply there shall be in any one of you an evil heart of unbelief, in falling away from the living God.*"—Heb. iii. 12, R.V.

WE know well that one of the most important parts of a retreat is the effort to deepen in ourselves the sense of sin. We are often reminded that the lack of a due sense of the seriousness of sin is the great defect of modern religious life. In this respect we have departed a long way from the temper of the old-fashioned Evangelicals, or early Tractarians; and even from Broad Churchmen like Maurice and Kingsley, who were profoundly conscious that the social and economic evils against which they fought were really due to selfishness and sin; and they, with all religious reformers, derived their passion for righteousness from the intensity of their struggle with evil in themselves. As we study the Epistle to the Hebrews we find that a certain doctrine about the prevalence and universality of sin underlies the whole argument. No one can

approach the doctrine of sacrifice, priesthood, atonement, without facing the question.

Let us, then, examine some of the passages which throw light on the nature of sin and warn us of its danger. There is no direct statement about the origin of sin, but it is everywhere implied that all men are sinners. CHRIST alone is without sin ; He is separated from sinners (vii. 26) in a class apart, while every other priest taken from among men and sharing with them their weakness and infirmities, needs to offer *for himself* and for the errors of the people (ix. 7), and shall be able to "bear gently with the ignorant and erring, for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity." (v. 2).

I

Whatever account may be given of its first entry into the world, sin is universal and rightly called original. What we mean by original sin was well expressed by Dr. Temple in one of his early Rugby sermons :—"We mean to say that sin is not something which has penetrated into our nature from the outside ; that it is not a garment thrown over our shoulders, which may therefore be stripped off like a garment ; that it is not the mere result of evil example, or of any external influences whatever ; that it is not learned like a lesson of evil, nor caught like an infectious disease. It is a part of our very selves. It has its springs in the very sources of our being. It mingles its poison with the very first beginnings

of our life, whether spiritual or natural. It cannot be cast off. It cannot be torn up by the roots. It cannot be treated by any medicine which discipline, or education, or example can supply. Penetrate into man as deeply as you will, and you cannot reach its origin ; drill him almost into a machine and you will not kill the life of this fatal power. Nay, it sometimes seems as if by long drilling you might kill everything else ; kill affection and stifle impulse, and dry up the imagination, and convert the reason itself into a mere engine for producing arguments at need ; and yet you will not kill the inborn spirit of evil ; some day, by some accident, it is roused to unusual violence, and bursts through all fetters, and reasserts its independence as the last, but, in this world, imperishable token of humanity." [1]

In xii. 1 sin is described as "that which doth so easily beset us" ; and the phrase has given rise to a good deal of exhortation based on the notion that every one has something, which may be described as his or her besetting sin. Very likely that is true in fact ; but it is not what the Greek words *τὴν εὐπερίστατον ἁμαρτίαν* really mean. They are best translated in the margin of the revised version, sin "which doth so closely cling to us." It is not that we are beset by one or more particular sins, but that sin is all round about us, like a flood in which we are in danger of being immersed. We may well notice the many different words for sin in this Epistle, and

[1] *Rugby Sermons*, i. 12.

the frequency of their occurrence. There are ἁμαρτία, the missing of the mark, as when a man shoots an arrow which falls short; very frequently ἀνομία, lawlessness (i. 9; viii. 12; x. 17); ἀδικία, injustice (viii. 12); παράβασις, transgression, (ii. 2; ix. 15); and παρακοή, disobedience (ii. 2). One word, ἀγνοήμα, ignorance, occurs in ix. 7, and nowhere else in the New Testament.

Again, the Epistle emphasizes the fact that the old Jewish law witnessed to the universality of sin. The sacrificial system grew out of the universal sense of guilt, and served to educate the conscience, while it could never take away sin.

II

We should meditate on some of the results of sin which the Epistle discloses.

(1) We have already referred to ii. 1, where we are shown the danger of drifting away from our moorings. It is so easy to follow the line of least resistance; to substitute convention for reality, and to be swayed by currents of popular opinion; but as every transgression and disobedience receives a just recompense of reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?

(2) Again, in iii. 12, we see how the deceitfulness of sin leads to the hardening of the heart, that is, the gradual fixing of the will into an attitude of permanent alienation from God. There is a searching passage in S. Bernard[1] on

[1] *De Consideratione*, i. 2.

the peril of a hardened heart. He is writing to Pope Eugenius to warn him of what will happen if, in the midst of his manifold occupations, he does not make time for prayer and meditation. If he does not "withdraw himself for a while, he will surely be carried whither he would not. You ask whither? To a hard heart. Do not ask what that is; if you do not dread it, it is yours already. The hard heart is that which does not shudder at itself only because it cannot feel. Why do you ask me? Ask Pharaoh. No one of a hard heart ever obtained salvation unless God had mercy and took from him, as the prophet says, the heart of stone and gave him a heart of flesh. What, then, is a hard heart? It is one which is neither broken by penitence, nor softened by piety, nor moved by prayers: it does not yield to threats, it is made harder by blows. It is ungrateful for benefits, untrustworthy in counsel, cruel in judgment, shameless in foul things, reckless in danger, inhuman towards human affairs, rash towards divine, forgetful of the past, negligent of the present, improvident of the future."

III

We must notice two passages in the Epistle which enforce the extreme gravity of post-baptismal sin.

(1) In vi. 4–8 the writer *appears* to teach that there is no forgiveness for backsliders. His language is very strong. As S. Chrysostom

remarks, he does not say it is not fitting, or not convenient, or not lawful, but he says it is impossible to renew them again to repentance. How can we reconcile these appalling words with the gospel of full and free forgiveness for all sinners who repent?

Primasius shows that a distinction must be drawn between two kinds of penitence; "one can be called the preparation for Baptism, and this the Apostle here excludes, but the other is that through which those who have entangled themselves in grave sin after Baptism can be restored."

We must insist that one who has sinned gravely after Baptism cannot possibly be in the same position as one who sinned while he was in ignorance, and outside the covenant of grace. The lapsed may indeed be restored, and God has given us in the grace of absolution a precious remedy for post-baptismal sin; but one who is so restored is restored to the position of a penitent, in which he must walk humbly all the days of his life.

The special gravity of post-baptismal sin is too little understood. It was by insisting upon it sixty years ago that Dr. Pusey and the Oxford Tractarians brought men to see the need of penitence and the value of sacramental confession; and we shall do the like if we lay to heart the wholesome severity which is so characteristic of this Epistle.

(2) The same stern doctrine is found in x. 26:

"For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment," etc.

Here again we must notice that in the case assumed there is not merely the falling into some special sin but the complete and wilful rejection of CHRIST. In such a case there is no other sacrifice for sin, and nothing to expect but the severest judgment.

IV

The study of these and similar passages in the Epistle will surely send us to our knees in penitence. We shall try to measure our sins all the more severely as we think of all our past experience of the love and mercy of GOD. We have been "enlightened"; (the word φωτιζεσθαι has been applied to Holy Baptism since the time of Justin Martyr, and may well have meant it here). We were made partakers of the HOLY GHOST (in Confirmation), we have tasted of the heavenly gift (in the Holy Eucharist), we have tasted the good word of GOD and the powers of the world to come (in the absolution, which anticipates the judgment day).

The greatness of our privilege is the measure of our sin, and though we can never again be as those who approach the Sacrament of Holy Baptism for the first washing away of all their sins; yet if we are willing to spend our days as restored penitents we may "draw near with boldness unto

the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in time of need."

Perhaps you will find that the chief blessing that the retreat affords is the opportunity of hearing, through the lips of a fellow-sinner, who is the accredited messenger of JESUS CHRIST, the words which are so full of comfort :—

> "Our LORD JESUS CHRIST, Who hath left power to His Church to absolve all sinners who truly repent and believe in Him, of His great mercy forgive thee thine offences: And by His authority committed to me, I absolve thee from all thy sins, in the Name of the FATHER, and of the SON, and of the HOLY GHOST. Amen."

I do not say that this special remedy for sin and precious means of grace is necessary for all; whether to use it or not is for the individual conscience to decide—let not those who use it disparage the penitence of others who do not, but let no one hinder another's liberty to use it if she will.

Notes of Retreat Addresses on

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

IV. The Unseen World

"*Ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable hosts of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better than that of Abel.*"—Heb. xii. 22–24, R. V.

LET us spend a few moments on our knees in trying to realize our place in the world of spirits. As we gather in this church, surrounded by companions who cherish the same ideals and are associated with us in the effort to live the risen life, we are conscious of how much we owe to their silent sympathy, their example, and their prayers; and we are mindful of many others absent in body but present in spirit. Some who hoped to have been with us are hindered by sickness, and

some who have been with us in former years have passed within the veil; but we feel that they are not far away, for our fellowship in CHRIST is independent of time and space, and even of what men call life and death. And so we sing:

"Let saints on earth in concert sing
With those whose work is done;
For all the servants of our King
Both quick and dead are one.

One family we dwell in Him,
One Church, above, beneath;
Though now divided by the stream,
The narrow stream of death."

The whole intention of the Epistle is to make men realize the nearness and reality of the unseen world; and in the special passage on which we meditate to-night we are assured that the unseen world is not another state of existence in which we may only hope to find ourselves after death, but it is one in which we have a share already, for it is written, "Ye are come." Already we have our place and station in the world of spirits, and that is why we must not cling to what is material, earthly, transitory.

Once more, we remember how these Hebrew Christians were in sorrow and perplexity because of the imminent destruction of the Temple, and the true source of consolation was to be found in the remembrance that the things, which they had valued in the past, were but shadows of the great reality now within their reach.

Men are always tempted to rest in this world of phenomena, and again and again comes the call, "Lift up your hearts" : "Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth ; for ye are dead, and your life is hid with CHRIST in GOD." The peril of idolatry has not passed away. I do not mean that we are tempted to identify the living GOD with any material representation of Him ; and, further, I doubt whether any human being ever did so, at least, if he understood in the slightest degree what we mean by GOD ; but it is quite possible to make so much of churches, pictures, books, and helps to worship that they really hinder the access of the soul to the Eternal and the Uncreate. Bear with me if I venture very gently to suggest that there may be a danger in the craving which is felt by some, who love our LORD, for the perpetual manifestation of His Presence in the reservation of the Blessed Sacrament. I need not say that I greatly desire permission to reserve the Blessed Sacrament for the purpose of giving communion to the sick, in all cases where it can be shown that the normal provision made by the Prayer Book is insufficient, but when men wish for the perpetual reservation of the Sacrament in order that the supreme Object of worship may always be within reach of our bodily senses, I am horribly afraid that dangers lie in a mode of worship which was not suggested by our LORD, and which, so far as we know, never occurred to the mind of the Apostles.

The worship of the Eternal and Uncreate

always requires the highest powers of heart and mind and will; and it is the mark of a false and unspiritual religion to demand that concessions should always be made to the craving for what we can touch and see.

It was a grievous loss to the Hebrew Christians when the Temple and its services were no longer within their reach, and so it is quite natural to feel the loss when we are hindered from attending a church where the services and the ministry are specially congenial and endeared to us by long association; but there is something wrong with our religion if we do not find ourselves becoming increasingly independent of all outward things as we realize more and more the Presence of our LORD, and His holy angels, at every altar where the Holy Eucharist is celebrated in His Name and by His authority.

As a help to realize the unseen world it is good for us to meditate much on the ministry of the holy angels. Too often Christian people think of angels as no more real than fairies; but it was not so with serious and devout believers like Dante, or Milton, or Richard Hooker. It is told of the latter that when he lay a dying, after he had made his last confession and received absolution and Holy Communion, he was indisposed for further speech with men, but as he lay absorbed in meditation they asked him of what he was thinking, to which he replied that "he was meditating on the number and nature of the blessed angels and their wonderful

obedience and order, without which peace could not be in heaven, and, oh, that it were so on earth!"

The thought of angels was not unreal to S. Paul when he made their presence a reason for covering a woman's head in church.

The ministry of angels is associated in Holy Scripture with all the chief events in the history of redemption. An angel announced to Blessed Mary that she should be the Mother of the Saviour; angels sang the first Christmas anthem; angels ministered to JESUS at His Temptation and in His Agony; angels were the heralds of His Resurrection; and at His Ascension angels declared that He should come again.

The existence of the angels presents no difficulty to those who believe in the living GOD, and physical science, which recognizes an almost infinite variety of living beings between man and that narrow border-line where animate and inanimate nature meet, has nothing to say against the possibility, or the probability, of a series of spiritual beings in an ascending scale between man and his Maker.

Now, the Epistle to the Hebrews is singularly rich in its teaching about the life and ministry of angels. In chapter i the contrast is drawn out between created spirits and the Eternal SON. He is immeasurably superior to them, and they owe Him worship; but they are ministering spirits sent forth to minister. The words of the authorized version suggest a tautology which is

not to be found in the original. They are ministering or worshipping spirits (λειτουργικὰ πνεύματα), whose first activities are directed towards God. They always do Him service in heaven, but then by His appointment they are also sent forth for a ministry (εἰς διακονίαν) to men.

This distinction between these twofold activities of the angels suggests a very practical thought. They are our examples, and we are taught to pray that God's will may be done on earth as it is in heaven. There is set before us not only the order and harmony of the physical universe in which the sun and moon and the stars in their courses fulfil His word; there is also the willing conscious obedience of spirits, who are like ourselves, in that they are made for God, and find their happiness in doing Him service, but unlike ourselves in that they are free from the entanglement of the flesh.

We set before ourselves, then—

(1) Their activity towards God, and remember that we owe our first and highest duty to God. This must be asserted in view of the modern tendency to substitute philanthropy for religion, and to make the service of man of more importance than the worship of God.

(2) But the fruits of our devotion to the worship of God must be shown in our ministry to men. It is a matter of common experience that the philanthropy which lasts is based on religion. The loving service of suffering humanity, exhibited by the devoted and unselfish nurse,

is almost—if not quite—always the outcome of conscious gratitude and love to GOD.

There is, of course, much more in the Epistle about the nature and ministry of angels, in relation to our LORD, to Moses and the Law, and in the teaching about the Incarnation. Stress is laid upon the fact that the Eternal Word did not take upon Him the nature of angels but of men. Men, not angels, were the objects of redeeming love; but our fellowship with the angels is real. We may ask for their guidance and protection, we may call them to join with us in our worship, and our loving intercourse with them will be a constant reminder of our place in the world of spirits.

O everlasting GOD, Who hast ordained and constituted the services of Angels and men in a wonderful order; Mercifully grant, that as Thy holy Angels alway do Thee service in heaven, so by Thy appointment they may succour and defend us on earth; through JESUS CHRIST our LORD. Amen.

Notes of Retreat Addresses on

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

V. The Person of our Lord

"*Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, even Jesus.*"—Heb. iii. 1, R.V.

PLACING ourselves once more in the Presence of God, let us pray for grace to understand aright the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ, dwelling for a few moments on the word κατανοήσατε, consider. It is an emphatic word, expressing attention and continuous observation and regard. Think out, get to the bottom of, master the idea of, Christ as the Apostle revealing the mind of God to man, and the High Priest representing humanity to God. In the words of Bengel, it is He Who pleads the cause of God with us and pleads our cause with Him.

(1) We can easily trace in the New Testament the steps by which the disciples came to recognize the Person of our Lord. The difference in the point of view represented by the synoptic Gospels and S. John has been exaggerated, but it exists,

and so also there is a difference between the earlier and the later epistles of S. Paul. It was natural that men should think of our LORD first as a man, who went about doing good, then as a teacher come from GOD, next as the promised Messiah, then as the LORD of life and death, and last, as the Eternal Word made Flesh. So far as these successive stages are represented by the order of the inspired books, the Epistle to the Hebrews falls into its place as the link between S. Paul and S. John.

We find indeed S. John's own word λόγος in Hebrews iv. 12, "For the Word of GOD is living, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword," etc., and if we hesitate to say that the author means to speak of the very Word Who was in the beginning with GOD, we can at least affirm that the doctrine of S. John i. 1 and Hebrews i. 3 are identical. If He is the effulgence of His FATHER'S glory, and the impress of His Person, He must be consubstantial, co-eternal, Very GOD of Very GOD.

He is the express image, not of the FATHER'S Person (A.V.), but of His substance; therefore He is not the SON of GOD as we all are sons of GOD, but His Sonship is unique. The inspired writer does not think of a man deified, but of GOD made Man.

The doctrine of the Epistle is well summed up by Dr. Ottley: "The SON is described as the radiance or effulgence of the Divine glory, i.e. perfectly manifesting the Divine character and

attributes, and also as express image of the Divine essence, i.e. embodying in a distinct personality the totality of Godhead. The natural mediator in nature upholding the universe as creator, sustainer, and heir of all things. He is in virtue of His Sonship the effective mediator in the sphere of grace. In His own Person He makes atonement for sin; in His own Person He assumes our nature, and lifts it to the divine throne. Such is the transcendent dignity of the SON of GOD, and it is exhibited by the method of comparison. CHRIST is contrasted successively with the highest ministers of the old dispensation. He is above prophets, above angels, above Moses the mediator of the law, above Joshua the giver of rest to Israel. The partial and fragmentary message of the prophets is contrasted with the final and authoritative word of the SON; the dependence and service of created angels with the immutability, the eternal years, the universal sovereignty of the SON; the minister in GOD's household with the Maker of the house; the captain who brought Israel into the troubled rest of Canaan with the ascended King who provides for the people of GOD the repose of an eternal sabbath"[1]

(2) Though the Epistle to the Hebrews is far removed from a merely humanitarian conception of CHRIST, it insists on the reality of His human nature. The Redeemer is shown to be one with the race He came to redeem. In ii. 11, we are

[1] *Lectures on the Incarnation*, vol. i. p. 122.

told "He that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one." Whether with Dr. Westcott we refer this to the common Fatherhood of GOD, or whether, as I venture to prefer, we refer it to Adam, He shares our flesh and blood (ii. 14), and is therefore our adequate representative and our true example.

The reality of our LORD's manhood is proved by three points specially suitable for our meditation in retreat :—(1) His temptation ; (2) His sufferings ; (3) His death.

I

(1) The fact that our LORD was tempted is briefly stated in S. Mark ; details which can only have been derived from our LORD's own description of His spiritual experience are preserved in S. Matthew and S. Luke ; but the permanent value of His temptation for ourselves is nowhere so clearly shown as in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

(2) The suggestion that the narratives in S. Matthew and S. Luke are fragments of His own autobiography revealed to His disciples throws a flood of light upon difficulties that have been felt. We shrink from the literal interpretation which expects us to believe that our LORD was actually transferred from place to place by the devil—now to a pinnacle of the Temple, now to a high mountain, from which it was possible to see all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. It is surely more reverent and more reasonable to suppose that our LORD was clothing

in symbolical language, which His disciples would easily understand, the spiritual experience of a conflict fought out in the recesses of His soul. Let me remind you in passing that a magnificent interpretation of the temptation is to be found in Milton's *Paradise Regained*.

More than once our LORD must have said to His disciples, "I will tell you how I was tempted," and the temptations through which He passed were typical and representative; but they were also adapted to the unique circumstances of the divine and human Deliverer, facing in the wilderness the problems which lay between Him and His final victory.

Shall He use His Divine power to supply His own bodily wants, or shall He hunger, and wait patiently for GOD? Shall He call attention to Himself and His message by a sensational display of His confidence in GOD? Shall He win the kingdoms of the world by compromise with evil, which would in fact involve doing homage to Satan? These temptations which He faced and conquered correspond with the temptations to self-indulgence, presumption, and worldliness which come in various shapes to us all.

(3) But it is from the Epistle to the Hebrews that we chiefly learn how the temptation of our LORD bears upon our own. They are the guarantee of His full sympathy, in that "He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted" (ii. 18), and "We have not a high priest which cannot be

touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but one that hath been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (iv. 15). Sometimes we are inclined to think that our LORD could not have been tempted as we are, for our temptations result so largely from our own past sins. The difficulty of resisting evil or wandering thoughts is largely due to the fact that in the past we have not resisted the beginnings of sensuality, or have failed to acquire that discipline of the mind which makes for concentration; or, again, we may say that our temptations are often the result of hereditary influence. It is true that "the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children unto the third and fourth generation."

Well! we know that in our LORD there was no kind of temptation which resulted from His own past sin, and by His miraculous birth from a virgin the hereditary taint of evil was cut off. When He took our nature, He cleansed it in the taking. Yet He was tempted not less but more than other men; and the explanation is that temptation belongs to human nature as such. As S. Paul puts it in 1 Cor. x. 13, "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man"; where, I think, the authorized version is better than the revised "such as man can bear." The Greek ἀνθρώπινος seems to mean "that which belongs to man's very nature." Man, as GOD made him in the beginning, is liable to temptation, and the Sinless One is not less but more tempted than others. In every other case

man has yielded in one direction or another before the tempter has done his worst, but in the case of our LORD the resistance was protracted, triumphant, complete.

Moreover, there is a sense in which our LORD's infinite sympathy with our fallen race enabled Him to enter into the experience of sinners. There is a memorable passage in one of Dr. Newman's later sermons where the agony of our LORD in the Garden of Gethsemane is shown to have consisted in His identification of Himself with sinners : "There He knelt, motionless and still, while the vile and horrible fiend clad His spirit in a robe steeped in all that is hateful and heinous in human crime, which clung close round His heart, and filled His conscience, and found its way into every sense and pore of His mind, and spread over Him a moral leprosy till He almost felt Himself to be that which He never could be." The sins of the world "are upon Him ; they are all but His own ; He cries to His FATHER as if He were the criminal, not the victim. His agony takes the form of guilt and compunction. . . . He is the real penitent, all but the real sinner." [1]

II

But, again, the reality of our LORD's human nature is exhibited by His sufferings. As GOD —"without body, parts, or passions"—the Eternal Word could not suffer, but in assuming our human

[1] *Discourses to Mixed Congregations.*

nature He laid Himself open to sufferings in body, mind, and spirit, and we must remember that the capacity for suffering is greatest in the highest and most perfect of our race.

No retreat is complete without some special meditation on the Cross, and so without attempting to add any words of my own I will ask you to spend a little while upon your knees in the devout contemplation of our Saviour's sufferings on the Cross; remembering the words, "JESUS also, that He might sanctify the people through His own Blood, suffered without the gate" (xiii. 12).

III

Lastly, this sympathy with us is attested by the fact that He tasted death (ii. 9). The expression is remarkable. Chrysostom, Theodoret, and Primasius suggest that the word refers to the swiftness with which He passed through death to resurrection, but interesting as that idea seems, it is more probable that the writer meant to insist that our LORD tasted, or experienced, the bitterness of death. It was only possible for the Sinless One to taste the full horror of death as the consequence of sin. He would not have been, as He is, one with us in every experience of our mortal life unless He had shared not only temptation and suffering, but the separation of soul and body, and the progress through that underworld where disembodied spirits wait for resurrection.

Notes of Retreat Addresses on

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

VI. Priesthood

"*For every high priest, being taken from among men, is appointed for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins.*"—Heb. v. 1, R.V.

LET us meditate this afternoon (1) on the meaning of priesthood; (2) on the priesthood of our Lord; (3) on the way in which the ministerial priesthood of the Church meets our deepest needs.

I

The Epistle to the Hebrews and the Revelation of S. John are the only books in the New Testament in which the work of our Lord is set forth as specially sacerdotal. In the Gospels neither He nor His Apostles are described as priests. In the Acts of the Apostles and the pastoral epistles of S. Paul we trace the gradual organization of the Christian ministry, but the word ἱερεύς, "sacrificing priest," is never applied to the Christian minister. There are πρεσβυτέροι, "presbyters," from which our word "priest" is derived, but the

term, which was applied to the priests of the Old Testament and priests in the pagan world, is carefully avoided. It is on this account that many people suppose that the very idea of priesthood has no place in the Church of CHRIST, and the popular belief is expressed in a memorable passage in Dr. Lightfoot's essay on the Christian ministry :—

"The kingdom of CHRIST, not being a kingdom of this world, is not limited by the restrictions which fetter other societies, political or religious. It is in the fullest sense free, comprehensive, universal. It displays this character, not only in the acceptance of all comers who seek admission, irrespective of race or caste or sex, but also in the instruction and treatment of those who are already its members. It has no sacred days or seasons, no special sanctuaries, because every time and place alike are holy. Above all, it has no sacerdotal system. It interposes no sacrificial tribe or class between GOD and man, by whose intervention alone GOD is reconciled and man forgiven. Each individual member holds personal communion with the Divine Head. To Him immediately he is responsible, and from Him directly he obtains pardon and draws strength." [1]

No doubt the bishop's essay does not bear the construction which has been placed upon it and the inferences to which it has given rise, but the repudiation of the whole idea of

[1] *Commentary on Philippians.*

mediation and the rejection of priesthood are unfortunate, and surely inconsistent with the Epistle to the Hebrews.

Dr. Moberly has shown that the bishop was misled by taking the Aaronic priesthood as the normal type, whereas the Epistle to the Hebrews speaks of a different type, primitive, independent of Judaism, and universal. CHRIST was not a priest after the order of Aaron but after the order of Melchizedek.

The whole argument of the Epistle turns not on the rejection of priesthood, but on the appeal to an earlier, truer form. We are not concerned with a priesthood which was local, national, transitory, but with one of a far higher order, of which Melchizedek stands out as the typical representative.

We should carefully compare the references to Melchizedek in this Epistle with Genesis xiv. 18–20, and Psalm cx. Who was this mysterious figure—King of Righteousness, King of Salem or Peace, without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, greater than Abraham, made like the SON of GOD? Is he some historical person, at once a king and a priest, preserving the primitive worship of the Most High? Personally I incline to the belief, which was held by S. Ambrose but is now uncommon, that Melchizedek was none other than our LORD Himself. It seems so difficult to explain his appearance and the references to him in the Epistle to the Hebrews in any other way

that I class it with those other theophanies in the Old Testament which foreshadowed the Incarnation. However this may be, from the teaching about Melchizedek we learn :

(1) That the priesthood of our LORD was universal ; it had nothing to do with the limitations of the Jewish law ; (2) it is for the benefit of all men in every place ; (3) it is exercised not on earth but in heaven.

Now, this teaching was just what the Hebrew Christians needed in their day of trial and transition. They could learn to bear the loss of the Temple and their old associations when they realized that the worship of the Christian Church was independent of any particular place. And so it is just what we need to render more pure and spiritual our Eucharistic worship.

Naturally we value special sanctuaries and old associations ; we may rightly do all we can under fitting circumstances to secure a glorious and costly ceremonial worship, provided that we remember that the Presence of CHRIST is as real, and the door of heaven as truly open in the humblest little mud-built hut as in the most costly cathedral, when the holy mysteries are celebrated in accordance with our LORD'S command.

We may be sure that there is something lacking in our faith if we are overmuch dependent on anything that is merely outward.

CHRIST, the one High Priest, meets the need of all men everywhere. It cannot be said too plainly that no religion really meets the deepest

needs of sinful man in his yearning after GOD if it does not provide an altar, a sacrifice, a priest; and these are provided in the Church, where CHRIST perpetuates His priestly acts through the ministry of men.

II

But if CHRIST is the one essential Priest as He is the one sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world, in what sense is it true that the carrying on of His redeeming work requires a ministry of men? The answer is that He has been pleased to associate with Himself a ministry of men who, by His appointment, exercise a ministerial priesthood. In His Name and by His authority they absolve, and bless, and offer a sacrifice which is not a repetition or renewal, but a pleading, a *re*presentation before GOD and man of the one sacrifice which CHRIST offered on the Cross and perpetually pleads in heaven.

In his reply to Bishop Lightfoot, Dr. Moberly has expressed with admirable clearness and force the true doctrine of ministerial priesthood:—"We may do well to separate ourselves from all language which would fairly imply a belief in the existence of a distinct caste, of higher holiness and strictly mediatorial power, as if by any right of its own to offer sacrifice or in any proper sense of the word to 'atone,' but I must venture to think that the theological judgment—or instinct—of the Anglican reformers, who, in the face of the destructive flood of Edwardian and Bucerian

Protestantism, retained with deliberate emphasis the Christian 'priesthood' as apostolic and perpetual in the Church of CHRIST, is at once more consistent, more Scriptural, and more profound, than any considerations which have been or can be urged to palliate a modification in this respect of the well-nigh immemorial language, expressive as it is of the wholly immemorial meaning, of the Christian Church." [1]

III

If there is, then, in the Church of CHRIST a ministerial priesthood, its duties and its responsibilities concern not only those who are called to that high and holy office, but the whole body of the faithful for whose sake the office exists. This suggests some practical thoughts.

(1) All Christian people are concerned that there should be a due supply of faithful men duly called, properly trained, and adequately supported. If the number of candidates for Holy Orders is insufficient, and their quality defective, it means a grievous loss to the whole Church. Hence the need of earnest prayer, especially in the Ember weeks, and of liberal support to some well-considered scheme for providing fit men with necessary training.

(2) All Christian people are responsible for the use they make of the ministry which GOD provides.

I think you desire that in every parish, if it be

[1] *Ministerial Priesthood*, p. 281.

possible, the clergy should celebrate day by day the Holy Eucharist; but if so, there must be a due supply of faithful worshippers and frequent communicants. Again, you believe that GOD has "given power, and commandment, to His ministers, to declare and pronounce to His people, being penitent, the absolution and remission of their sins." But these awful and mysterious powers will once more fall into abeyance if there is in the laity so little sense of sin that there are few, if any, to ask for absolution.

(3) Lastly, there is one great function of the priesthood, in which all Christians have a share. It has been well said: "Leadership in Eucharistic worship, truly understood, involves many corollaries of spirit and life—the bearing of the people on the heart before GOD; the earnest effort of intercessory entreating; the practical translation of intercession into pastoral life, and anxiety, and pain." [1]

If the clergy need faithful communicants to share with them the responsibility and privilege of the Eucharistic sacrifice, so they need the help of a band of intercessors to join with them in the constant remembrance before GOD of all the members of the Body of CHRIST. The practice of intercession is a duty, a privilege, and a trust, which belong to all who are in a state of grace.

Our retreat will be doing a true and lasting service to ourselves and many others if we are led to more frequent and more fervent intercession.

[1] Moberly, *Ministerial Priesthood*, p. 261.

Notes of Retreat Addresses on

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

VII. The Tabernacle

"*But Christ having come a high priest of the good things to come, through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation, nor yet through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, entered in once for all into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption.*"—Heb. ix. 11, 12, R. V.

LET us take as a prelude for our meditation this evening the picture of the High Priest of Aaron's line entering into the holy place on the great Day of Atonement, as it is described in Leviticus xvi. The congregation stands without, the cloud of incense rises, the priest, bathed in pure water, clothed in the holy garments, with the blood of the sin-offering, enters into the holy place as the representative and spokesman of the race.

I

From the old covenant we turn to the new, and find the whole scene transfigured

and made immeasurably more glorious and spiritual by the reference of it to our LORD. He is the representative not of Israel, but of humanity, offering not the blood of bulls and goats, but His own, passing out of sight not into an earthly tabernacle but into heaven itself.

> "For, as the priest of Aaron's line
> Within the holiest stood,
> And sprinkled all the mercy-shrine
> With sacrificial blood;
>
> So He, Who once atonement wrought,
> Our Priest of endless power,
> Presents Himself for those He bought
> In that dark noontide hour."

So far we have seen that the Epistle to the Hebrews sets forth the work of our LORD as being essentially sacerdotal. It is as the priestly representative of humanity that He can make atonement, absolve, and bless. The inspired writer, so far from treating the sacerdotal system as something alien from and inconsistent with the Gospel of CHRIST, dwells upon it with loving reverence as the best expression of eternal facts in the relation between GOD and man.

Perhaps we may see in this a contrast between the writer and S. Paul. His whole attitude to the ceremonial law is very different from that of the author of the Epistle to the Galatians. Perhaps it is a matter of temperament and association. There are some hearts and minds to whom an elaborate ceremonial appeals with peculiar force,

while others find the utmost simplicity more conducive to spiritual worship.

The religion of JESUS CHRIST, claiming to meet the needs of all sorts and conditions of men, can use a great variety of methods, and wisdom is justified of all her children, but we need to remind ourselves again and again that outward ceremonial must be judged by its fruits. If it helps to foster a spirit of faith, reverence, and devotion, it is well; if it distracts the mind and entangles the worshipper in things outward and material, it must yield to simpler ways.

It is remarkable that the Epistle to the Hebrews goes back behind the Temple to the Tabernacle, as though the intention of the old law was better expressed by what was obviously temporary and transient than by the solid foundations of the Temple, which attempted to give fixity and permanence to what was only meant to educate the worshipper to look out for good things to come.

It is even suggested by Dr. Westcott that the building of the Temple was the mark of a spiritual declension. It may have been so, but devout Israelites regarded the Temple as inadequate and unworthy of the Divine Majesty; and did not regard the material building as limiting or confining their worship.

Thus Solomon prayed: "But will GOD in very deed dwell on the earth? behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee; how

much less this house that I have builded!" (1 *Kings* viii. 27, R.V.).

II

We may well ponder over the question, how far it is possible that He, Who fills the universe, and is in the strictest sense incomprehensible, can reveal Himself in a special mode and a definite place. The best minds amongst the Jews believed that GOD was at once above and beyond all created things, and yet was willing to meet His people in Zion and in the Tabernacle as the appointed spiritual centre of the nation and the world. And so we believe that it is not inconsistent with His Divine omnipresence that the Eternal Word should pitch His tent among men, dwelling in the womb of the Blessed Virgin and revealing Himself unto men as a little child, growing up into manhood subject to the ordinary limitations of human nature. And further, those who really hold the central doctrine of the Incarnation find no serious difficulty in the belief that the Incarnate Word can still manifest Himself to faithful hearts under the forms of bread and wine. We hail the real Presence of our LORD in the Communion of His Body and His Blood; but that does not mean that He cannot, or will not, reveal Himself in other ways. His Presence is real in the midst of the Church, where two or three are gathered together in His Name; His Presence is real on the altars of the Church, when, by the power of the HOLY GHOST, what was mere bread and wine becomes His Body and His Blood; His Presence is real

in the hearts of His people, when, whether with or without the Holy Sacrament, they feed by faith on Him.

III

We may well meditate on the Tabernacle as typical of the way in which man may approach to God. (1) Its very structure was intended to impress upon the minds of the worshippers that God was willing to hold communion with His people, but that the approach required reverence and the office of a mediator. The way into the holy of holies was not yet open; but the appointed priest could intercede and offer an acceptable sacrifice.

(2) The details of its furniture are equally significant. To us the candlestick proclaims the Light of the World; the shewbread and the manna the Bread of Heaven; the golden censer the intercession offered; Aaron's rod that budded, the token of an accepted priesthood; the cherubim surrounding the mercy-seat remind us of the angels, who share our worship.

IV

Such meditation will lead us to make the most of our precious opportunity of access to the throne of grace. "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by the way which He dedicated for us, a new and living way, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh; and having a great priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in

fulness of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our body washed with pure water" (*Heb.* x. 19–22, R.V.)

In every good communion we draw near to JESUS, for the way is open into heaven itself, where we may dwell by faith.

In this wonderful passage we are reminded of the necessary conditions : courage, humility, vehement desire, the cleansing from our former sins, and the realized union with our LORD. May He Who is Himself the living Way guide our wandering steps and fold us in His peace !

Suffer me to remind you once more of the stages through which we should pass each time we prepare to receive Holy Communion.

(1) We must make sure of our forgiveness. We do not go to Holy Communion in order to be forgiven, but because we have good reason to believe that we are forgiven. The assurance of forgiveness comes to some as they humbly acknowledge their sins to GOD alone, and the HOLY SPIRIT fills their hearts with a sense of joy and peace ; but others are led to use the special means which our LORD in His love and mercy provides. "He hath given power and commandment to His ministers to declare and pronounce to His people, being penitent, the absolution and remission of their sins" ; and those who feel their sins very deeply cannot rest content without such a pledge and certificate of His favour and goodness towards them.

(2) We must kindle our expectation and desire

by dwelling much on the greatness of the gift we are called to receive. To make a good Communion is to take CHRIST into our hearts. He Who assumed our nature in the womb of the Blessed Virgin comes to dwell within the heart of each separate believer who comes to Him in penitence and faith.

(3) We must settle our intention by preparing beforehand the expression of our thanks for good things already received, and the expression of our vehement desire for things which we need and which He has promised to give.

> "Thou art coming to a King,
> Large petitions with thee bring,
> For His love and power are such
> None can ever ask too much."

O GOD, Who in a wonderful Sacrament hast left unto us a memorial of Thy Passion, grant us, we beseech Thee, so to venerate the sacred mysteries of Thy Body and Blood that we may ever perceive within ourselves the fruit of Thy redemption ; Who livest and reignest with the FATHER and the HOLY GHOST, one GOD, world without end. Amen.

Notes of Retreat Addresses on

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

VIII. The Idea of Perfection

"*Wherefore let us cease to speak of the first principles of Christ, and let us 'be carried on' unto perfection.*"—Heb. vi. 1.

LET us begin our meditation on this last day in retreat by an act of thankful remembrance of the resurrection of our Lord.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to His abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 *Peter* i. 3).

"And now, Lord, what is my hope?
Truly my hope is even in Thee."

Almighty God, Who through Thine only-begotten Son Jesus Christ hast overcome death, and opened unto us the gate of everlasting life; We humbly beseech Thee, that, as by Thy special grace preventing us Thou dost put into our minds good desires, so by

Thy continual help we may bring the same to good effect; through JESUS CHRIST our LORD, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the HOLY GHOST, ever one GOD, world without end. Amen.

On the last day of a retreat, after we have humbled ourselves before GOD in confession and realized afresh the depth of His mercy and the uplifting power of His HOLY SPIRIT, we look forward to fresh efforts after holiness. If our spiritual life is not to be dull and stagnant, there must be a continual struggle after a standard which always seems beyond our reach. It has been well said by Dr. Illingworth: "The Sermon on the Mount bids us aim at perfection, and so we are condemned to perpetual penitence and perpetual effort."

Now the idea of perfection is very prominent in the Epistle to the Hebrews, and we might well take as a kind of motto by which to remember its whole teaching the words in the opening verse of chapter vi.

I

ἐπὶ τὴν τελειότητα φερώμεθα. The full force of the words is not well expressed by the A.V., "let us go on," or even by the R.V., "let us press on." It is rather, "let us be carried along." The word suggests that we are in the hands of One "Who upholds all things by the word of His power." Dr. Westcott thus expresses it—"Let us be borne on to perfection, not simply 'let us go on,' or even

'let us press on,' as if the advance depended on the vigour of our effort, but 'let us be borne on' with that mighty influence which waits only for the acceptance of faith that it may exert its sovereign sway, 'borne on' by Him Whose unseen arms are outstretched beneath the most weary and the weakest, 'borne on' by Him, Who is the Way and the End of all human endeavour." [1]

Certainly it makes all the difference, when we realize that we are in the hands of One Who is carrying all things, which do not resist His will, to their appointed end. One who had well-nigh broken with definite Christian belief said that he could not but recognize in the world "an eternal something not himself that makes for righteousness." We need no such clumsy phrase to express the energy of the Spirit of God, Who puts into our minds good desires, and supplies the grace to bring the same to good effect if only we yield ourselves to Him. Dr. Westcott has shown that the leading idea of the Epistle to the Hebrews is that of Christus Consummator—not Christus Consolator. He is the author and finisher of our Faith Who is bearing along the universe, humanity at large, and every individual soul, to their predestined end.

II

Let us examine, then, this morning, the idea of perfection. The adjective τελείος, with the

[1] *Christus Consummator*, p. 14.

verb derived from it occur very frequently; e.g., in v. 14, ix. 11, vi. 1, ii. 10, v. 9, vii. 28, x. 14, xi. 40, xii. 23; and once our LORD is called τελειώτης, the perfecter or finisher. In each case the underlying idea is the fulfilment of a purpose—τέλος. Every created thing is τελεῖος, when it is able to accomplish the end for which it was made. "One who is τελεῖος has reached the end which is in each case set before him—maturity of growth, complete development of powers, full enjoyment of privileges, perfect possession of knowledge." [1]

Let us consider the word first as it is applied to our LORD Himself in His sacred humanity. As man He *gradually* attained to full growth in stature, and to full possession of knowledge; we may even venture to say that there was a growth in holiness, or at least in capacity for His priesthood by the experience of temptation and suffering. There is no greater difficulty in conceiving of His growth in knowledge acquired through books and men, than His growth in bodily strength and vigour by food and exercise.

As GOD He was perfect in knowledge and in power, but by the mystery of the Incarnation He came under conditions which necessarily involve a gradual process; "for it became Him, for Whom are all things, and through Whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the author of their salvation perfect through sufferings" (ii. 10, R.V.).

[1] Westcott, *Epistle to the Hebrews*, p. 65.

If we hesitate to say that the sufferings of our LORD contributed to His holiness, just as we say that ordinary men and women grow in holiness through the discipline of pain and sorrow, we cannot question that the efficacy of His priesthood and His capacity for entering into and bearing the sorrows of His people was continually enhanced by His own experience of temptation; and for the perfection of that priesthood was needed not only suffering but death. All priesthood involves the sacrifice of self, and the *perfection* of the self-sacrifice consists in laying down one's life for others.

III

Let us think, then, of the process by which we are to attain to our own perfection. In the previous chapter the Hebrew Christians were rebuked for their lack of progress. They had become "dull of hearing," and while with their age and experience they ought to be teaching others, they needed that some one should teach them again "the rudiments of the first principles of the oracles of GOD."

They were still in need of milk for babes when they ought as "full grown," or perfect men, to be ready for solid food (v. 11–14). Then in chapter vi the Apostolic writer enumerates the first principles, not to disparage them, but to insist that they should be the starting-point of further advance (vi. 1, 2). We may well ask ourselves whether we are really getting on

(i) in the "power to" pray, (ii) in the assimilation of spiritual truth, (iii) in the capacity to teach others. We enter the kingdom of heaven like little children, and we must never lose childlike humility; but we should be gradually attaining to the strength and maturity of full-grown manhood.

Christian life remains at a low level when very few advance beyond the knowledge and experience of babes in CHRIST, while the advance is meant for all.

Now the healthy growth of body, mind, and spirit comes from the exercise of the faculties of each and the assimilation of proper food. We must not forget that it is the will of GOD that all His creatures should reach their perfection, and we are responsible for the development, and improvement, of every part of our nature. Feebleness of body, vacancy of mind and spirit, which do not grow in the capacity for prayer and adoration, are alike offensive to Him, Who made us for Himself. As with our LORD, so with ourselves, temptation, suffering, and trials are the chief instruments by which character is formed; and our conformity to the model means conformity to the Cross of CHRIST. That we may lay to heart this old, but often forgotten truth, let us dwell on some searching words which I quote from Dr. Watson (Ian Maclaren)[1]:—"The cross was an open secret to the first disciples, and they climbed the steep

[1] *Mind of the Master.*

ascent to Heaven, by the Royal Way of the Holy Cross, but its simplicity has been often veiled in later days. Perhaps the simplicity of the symbol has cast a glamour over the modern mind and blinded us to its strenuous meaning. Art, for instance, with an unerring instinct for moral beauty, has seized the cross and idealized it. It is wrought in gold, and hung from the neck of light-hearted beauty ; it is stamped on the costly binding of Bibles that go to Church in carriages ; it stands out in bold relief in Churches that are filled with easy-going people. Painters have given themselves to crucifixions, and their striking works are criticized by persons, who praise the thorns in the crown, but are not satisfied with the expression in Jesus' face, and then return to their pleasures. Composers have cast the bitter Passion of Jesus into stately oratorios, and fashionable audiences are affected unto tears. Jesus' Cross has been taken out of His hands and smothered in flowers : it has become what He would have hated—a source of graceful ideas and agreeable emotions. When Jesus presented the cross for the salvation of His disciples, He was certainly not thinking of a sentiment, which can disturb no man's life, nor redeem any man's soul, but of the unsightly beam, which must be set up in the midst of a man's pleasures, and the jagged nails that must pierce his soul."

Notes of Retreat Addresses on

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

IX. The Cloud of Witnesses

"*Therefore let us also, seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith.*"—Heb. xii. 1, 2, R. V.

FOR our prelude this afternoon let us try to realize our fellowship with the saints, and pray for grace to share their faith and follow in their steps.

O Almighty God, Who hast knit together Thine elect in one communion and fellowship, in the mystical Body of Thy Son Christ our Lord; Grant us grace so to follow Thy blessed saints in all virtuous and godly living, that we may come to those unspeakable joys, which Thou hast prepared for them that unfeignedly love Thee; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

"Make us to be numbered with Thy saints : in glory everlasting."

Bearing in mind that we are in the hands of the Author and Perfecter of our faith, by Whom we may be carried along unto perfection, we know that our share in the life of our Saviour and His saints depends upon the principle of faith.

To understand the opening words of the twelfth chapter, they must be taken in close connection with what goes before. At the end of chapter x comes the solemn warning against the danger of relapse, and then the encouraging thought that "we are not of them that shrink back unto perdition ; but of them that have faith unto the saving of the soul."

This leads the apostolic writer to speak of faith, and he attempts a definition. He says, "Faith is the giving of substance to things hoped for, the test of things not seen" (xi. 1, R.V. margin) ; but he evidently feels that no definition of faith is really adequate.

Perhaps it is no more possible to define faith than it is possible to define love. Those who love another know well what they mean by a feeling that is too deep for words ; and so faith can only be described by pointing to the lives of faithful men and women. This leads to that wonderful catalogue of the heroes of faith ; but first it is made clear that faith is essential to any real understanding of the universe. It is by faith that we understand that the worlds have been

framed by the word of God. So again, faith is the first requisite of religion, for without faith it is impossible to please God, and he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that seek after Him (xi. 6).

I

From the examples of Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Jacob, Moses, Samuel, and the long list of faithful worthies, we see exhibited in various ways the one great principle of faith. It would be a most instructive exercise to meditate for many days to come on the lives of those heroes, one by one; and the catalogue is capable of indefinite extension. To the writer's list of heroes in the Old Testament—to the goodly fellowship of the prophets—we may add the glorious company of the Apostles, the noble army of martyrs, and representatives of the holy Church throughout the world. By faith S. Peter and S. Paul sealed their testimony with their blood. By faith Ignatius, on his road to martyrdom, welcomed the wild beasts of the Roman Colosseum who should rend the flesh and liberate the spirit to seek the face of God. By faith the Fathers of the Church defined her doctrine, ordered her discipline, and laid down the lines of a world-wide kingdom. By faith Gregory, our father who gave us baptism, saw in the English slave boys in the Roman Forum the first-fruits of our race to be brought into the family of God. From the blessed company of faithful ones in

every age we may pick out those whose example appeals with the greatest force to our own individual temperament. In the great cloud of witnesses there are many who never achieved name or fame on earth; and there are humble and holy men and women, whose example may be inconspicuous to others but very real to us.

II

Encouraged by the example, and aided by the prayers of all saints, we are called upon to lay aside every weight that hinders as well as every sin that enthralls.

At the close of a retreat it is not necessary to insist on the supreme importance of laying aside the sin "that clings so close" (see R.V. margin). As we have seen, the reference is not to some particular besetting sin, but to the whole entangling and surrounding flood of evil, from which we can escape only through faith in the power of GOD. We may take it for granted that all here are resolved to renounce all that is sinful; but, more than this, there are weights that hinder. Every one of us is hampered and hindered in running our Christian course by things not necessarily evil in themselves, but evil for us, if they hinder the eager gladness with which we should respond to the call of GOD. We may well ask, What holds me back from full surrender and unstinted service? Is it the love of pleasure, or the dread of pain? Is it the sense of self-importance, or the refusal to recognize the limits

of our own capacity? Is it the dangerous craving for too much human sympathy, or the unwholesome appetite for praise?

To understand what are the weights that hinder as well as the sins that beset, we need a self-knowledge that is only given in answer to the prayer:—"Try me, O God, and seek the ground of my heart; prove me, and examine my thoughts. Look well if there be any way of wickedness in me; and lead me in the way everlasting" (*Ps.* cxxxix. 23, 24).

III

Finally, let us remember, that is the very place where the doctrine of the Communion of Saints is brought before us with extraordinary eloquence and power, we are referred not to their example but to that of our Lord Himself. We are to be "looking unto Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising shame, and hath sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."

It should be with us as it was with the chosen three upon the holy Mount of the Transfiguration. They were conscious of the presence of departed saints, and it seemed to S. Peter as if he should make a tabernacle for Moses and for Elias as well as for his Master; but, when the Father's voice was heard out of the cloud saying, "This is My beloved Son: hear ye Him . . . they saw no man any more, save Jesus only."

O blessed JESUS, our Risen and Ascended LORD, we bless and praise Thy Name for all Thy saints ; but we desire with all our hearts to fix our eyes on Thee and Thee alone, that following along the royal way of Thy holy Cross we may be brought to a never-ending union with Thyself, in glory everlasting. Amen.

Notes of Retreat Addresses on

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

X. Perseverance

"*Now the God of peace, Who brought again from the dead the great shepherd of the sheep with the blood of the eternal covenant, even our Lord Jesus, make you perfect in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is well-pleasing in His sight.*"—Heb. xiii. 20, 21, R.V.

LET us contemplate our Risen and Ascended Lord; enthroned at God's right hand in heaven, worshipped by innumerable hosts of angels, looking down in boundless love and pity on those whose nature He wears, and whose keenest sorrows He has felt.

O God the King of Glory, Who hast exalted Thine only Son Jesus Christ with great triumph unto Thy kingdom in heaven; We beseech Thee, leave us not comfortless; but send to us Thine Holy Ghost to comfort us, and exalt us unto the same place whither our Saviour Christ is gone before, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee

and the HOLY GHOST, one GOD, world without end. Amen.

At the close of our retreat, let us gather up the lessons we have learned from this wonderful book.

(1) We have seen that the Epistle is addressed to those who, like ourselves, were often weary and perplexed. They missed their trusted leaders and fathers in the Faith who had seemed as links between them and the generation which saw JESUS in the flesh ; and they were threatened with the loss of forms of worship to which they were devoutly attached.

There is something wrong with the spiritual life of full-grown, middle-aged Christians, when they complain that they lack guidance and help. Their spiritual life should not depend only upon the sermons they hear, or the presence of some trusted guide. We must lift up our hearts and believe that if old things are passing away, it is because they are being transformed into something infinitely better. All else may change, but "JESUS CHRIST is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."

(2) We have marked the difference between the gradual, partial, imperfect revelation of the Old Testament, and the final absolute revelation of the New ; but we do not pretend that we ourselves have as yet grasped all that is involved in the Christian revelation. It lends a new interest to our studies and meditations when we

realize that the HOLY SPIRIT is still guiding the Church and guiding individual souls to fresh discoveries of the mind of CHRIST. There are treasures in the Word of GOD waiting to yield themselves to the patient industry of scholars, and to reward the loving insight of illuminated saints; and, above all, there are eternal truths which have not yet been brought to bear upon social evils, which check the progress of the kingdom of GOD.

(3) We have seen that the Epistle insists on the universality of sin; and I trust we have laid to heart the solemn warnings it contains about the dangers of relapse, and the special gravity of post-baptismal sin.

(4) We have been brought face to face with the realities of the unseen world, in which already we live, and move, and have our being. We "are come . . . to innumerable hosts of angels . . . and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to JESUS the Mediator of a new covenant" (xii. 24). The constant remembrance of the departed in our prayers, and the asking for the guardianship and protection of the blessed angels serve as links in the chain which binds us to the unseen world.

(5) Again, we tried to appreciate the rich theology of the Epistle, treating it historically as the link between S. Paul and the Johannine doctrine of the Logos. On the one hand, we considered JESUS as the effulgence of the FATHER'S glory, and the very image of His substance; on the other, we saw that His true humanity is

guaranteed by the reality of His temptation, the intensity of His sufferings, and the fact that He tasted death.

(6) We saw that the Epistle is almost unique amongst the books of the New Testament, because it alone, with the Revelation of S. John, treats the work of our LORD as essentially sacerdotal. To understand the book we must bear in mind that sinful man cannot be reconciled to His Maker without an altar, a sacrifice, and a priest. Every other priesthood, whether Jewish or Pagan, was imperfect and transitory, the shadow of a great reality ; and that reality is the eternal priesthood of the Son of Man, Who reveals GOD to man, and represents man to GOD. This led us to consider the ministerial priesthood in which our LORD associates with Himself those who are commissioned to absolve and bless, and plead the one oblation, sacrifice, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world.

(7) In the imagery of the Tabernacle we have found the best illustrations of the way in which we are brought nearest to GOD, through the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of CHRIST.

Just as the Eternal and Uncreate, Who filleth all in all, could manifest a special presence in a special shrine, so He can, if He will, hide Himself within the Virgin's womb, within the veil of His own human flesh and blood, and, under the forms of bread and wine, on every Christian altar, where His servants duly fulfil His command, "Do this in remembrance of Me."

(8) The call to aim at perfection is overwhelming, but we have learned that its attainment does not depend upon the fitful efforts of our own unstable wills, for we are "being carried along" by the resistless might of One Who is rightly called Christus Consummator.

(9) Lastly, we have seen how inspiring is the example of that vast white-robed company, the cloud of witnesses, who bid us lay aside every weight and the besetting sin, that we may run with patience the Christian race. The saints have an interest in our endeavours, "GOD having provided . . . that, apart from us, they should not be made perfect."

Here is a point we have scarcely touched, but it is clear that the perfection to which we are called is not so much the perfection of the individual soul as the perfection of the Body of CHRIST.

How much we can do to help one another when we realize the power of intercession, and the value of association! I am thankful, indeed, that so many, who have met here in retreat, are now closely bound to one another and the Community of the Resurrection in the bonds of our Fraternity. Let me remind you once more of the preface to our rule:—

"The Fraternity of the Resurrection is an association for work and prayer on behalf of the Church of CHRIST at home and abroad. . . ."

"It is a principle deeply rooted in the Christian Gospel that the salvation of the many is to be

brought about by the life and labour of the few. Our LORD Himself described His followers as the salt of the earth ; and compared His kingdom to leaven hidden in the lump, until the whole is leavened. This has always been, and still is, the ideal of the Christian Church : but it has not always been conspicuously set forth in practice.

" Whenever the Church is popular and society is nominally Christian, there is good reason for extending the principle from the Church as a whole to particular groups within the Church, and for organizing societies designed to set forth special sides of our LORD's teaching, and to set it forth in special intensity.

" The aim of the Fraternity of the Resurrection is to associate men and women in Christian fellowship in order to reinforce in them the power of the risen life in all its intensity : that they may resist the natural tendency to sink to the level of dull average Christian faith and practice : that they may provoke one another to the highest aims and ideals : and that they may jointly offer themselves to our LORD, to be used by Him as salt and leaven, in whatever way He sees to be best."

We have felt in the past—and, as the years go on, and our numbers increase, we shall feel more and more—what it is to be sustained by the prayers of our faithful companions ; and, not least, of those who, having finished their course on earth, are waiting within the veil till that day, when,

as we humbly hope, we and they together shall have our part in the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, "may the hope of the Resurrection inspire you; and the grace of the Resurrection preserve you; and the fellowship of the Resurrection receive you eternally"!

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